

**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Special Meeting**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**September 18, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Ben Jerve, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Sara Stadler, Eric Goldberg  
MEMBERS ABSENT: None  
OTHERS PRESENT: Mary Beth Banios, Paige Hiller, Jason Drebitko, Malena Agin, Carole Pickett, Ben Ford, Kerilyn Bristow

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

**II. Town Plan - Education Chapter**

Ms. Banios explained strategic five year plan including facility planning. Potential for new middle high school discussed. Facility is outdated, is beyond its life cycle. Renovating existing building would cost as much or more than building new. Building new allows a functional modern building.

Mr. Goldberg asked about Act 60 limitations.

Mr. Drebitko noted capital projects and private funding can be netted out of annual school budgets. All towns have to vote to approve a major reconstruction/construction project, seven towns involved. Rebuild committee was not certain. Funding is highly unlikely to be ready by March 2020.

Mr. Segal noted the bond market (when one would search a bond) is normally a spring event.

The middle and high school building has a major ventilation issue. The building is not secure due to too many exterior doors. There is no fire suppression/sprinkler system. A structure built in the 1950s is not compliment with today's needs and requirements. It does not meet ADA standards.

The School's Strategic plan versus the Town Plan's visionary plan was discussed. The Town Plan does not supercede the School Board's Strategic Plan. Both are written for different purposes.

Woodstock is the only union district in the state trying to build a school. Compared this to a district like Burlington which is a one town school district. Getting approval from 7 different towns is additionally complicated by the different tax rates among the member towns.

One method to get approval by all towns is to budget renovations to all elementary schools. There are three active schools and one non-active, Prosper School in the district.

Funding projects under Act 60 requires gold towns such as Woodstock to raise additional funding on top of the project costs. For each dollar raised at the local level, additional funds are required that are then forwarded to receiving towns.

Mr. Pacht asked what is plan "B" if other towns don't support plan "A" (rebuild the school). Although Killington and Woodstock always pass the school budget, the other five towns do not.

Mr. Jervy suggested a recommendation be included in the plan to ask the Selectboard to fund an expert to deal with the issue.

Chair Miller noted a united front with a specific time line for action is required to address the issues. The plan we want should be advocated with full support from all interested bodies.

Mr. Drebitko estimated a three year window to design and approve a new school building.

Mr. Goldberg asked to keep alternative options alive, so at least some progress is accomplished.

Chair Miller noted there are other major renovation projects needed at the municipal level, the Town Hall and the Fire House are two.

Mr. Goldberg addressed the substance abuse issues at the high school. The abuse appears to be worse than the state average.

It was noted that \$125k was secured in grant funding to look into this problem. A counselor is on hand to deal with alcohol and drug counseling. Vapping is a current issue, as kids consider it to be the cool thing to do. The local police are considered a strong partner in monitoring use.

Is Woodstock's culture and economic level more conducive to drug and alcohol abuse?

Parents need to be involved. There is an apparent trend that parents are not as involved with their children's behavior as they need to be.

Woodstock is a magnet community. People want to live here. The plan should support the

fact that Woodstock is a destination community.

Mr. Goldberg felt Hanover has a more inspirational school culture for students who want to excel.

Ms. Hiller's daughter conducted a two day shadow program to get a better understanding of the Hanover school system. She did not like the experience and opted for Woodstock due to the open campus and being respected as a person and not a number.

The strategic plan will enhance the notion that the Woodstock school system is a destination district.

Academic excellence needs to be viewed as a positive goal. It will help all students not just the best and the brightest. Everyone needs to be pushed to achieve their best.

Chair Miller asked more about academic issues. Shy students apparently don't get good grades.

Mr. Goldberg asked why the school is only achieving a 40% in math standards. Outside consultants need to be brought in to make changes.

Ms. Banios stated these things take time to deal with. Understanding the problem and creating solutions takes a lot of effort. Teams have been established to deal with the math deficiencies. She has been at the school for only three years and is starting to make effective change.

Mr. Pacht asked about the early retirement initiative.

Four teachers took advantage of it last year and three teachers this year. The intent is to retain younger promising teachers with more opportunities.

Act 46 - the merger law, forced local budget issues. In the past, the municipalities paid for items that are school based. The act requires separation between school and town budget items.

Chair Miller refreshed the process of rewriting the Educational Chapter. The school board was asked to forward pertinent information that may have an impact on the town plan.

It was agreed that it is too late to add a budget item to the Town's annual budget. A consultant or expert would need private funding.

The PC will continue to work on this chapter and thanked all attendees for their input.

**III. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be October 2, 2019.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted\*,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town Planner

\* From Digital Recording