

Town of Woodstock  
Select Board Meeting  
August 16, 2022  
6:00 pm  
Town Hall & Zoom  
Minutes

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Chair Joe Swanson, Ray Bourgeois, Susan Ford, Tom Yennerell, Nikki Nourse, Douglas Keleher, Zoie Parent, Peter Vollers, Susan Boston, Al Alessi, Jon Spector, Matt Powers, Cynthia Volk, Tess Hunter, Jill Davies, David Nixa, Jon Spector, Mary Margaret Sloan

A. Call to order

1. Chair Swanson called the Select Board Meeting of August 16, 2022, to order at 6:00 pm.

B. Interviews for Town Historic Preservation Commission

1. Matthew Powers

- a. Mr. Powers stated that he is familiar with the CLG process in towns that are participating. He is the Executive Director at the History Center. They created a repository of building histories, organized their archive and inventoried the Town and Village's historic resources. He is aware of what the commission's responsibilities are.

2. Charlie Degener – tabled.

3. Douglas Keleher

- a. Mr. Keleher stated that he is a Town resident. He has an interest in history. He moved here in 1981. He has lived in some old historical homes. He came here to find the gravesites of some of his ancestors who were some of the original settlers of Woodstock. His family was here in the late 1700's. They moved on to Wyoming when things got tough in the late 1800's. that is where his mother is from. Her family tree extends back to Woodstock. So, in 1981 they ended up staying here. He got a job at the Woodstock Inn. He managed some of the properties for them including Suicide Six for seven years, as well as the Country Club and Fitness Center.

C. Citizen comments

1. Mr. Spector stated that the EDC and Select Board approved a grant for several housing programs. Two of which provided incentives for community members to build either accessory dwelling units or to convert their short term rentals into long term rentals.

- a. Chair Swanson stated that because the Select Board approved it already by motion and vote he does not think they need to do it again.

- b. Mr. Bourgeois agrees

- c. Ms. Ford agrees. As long as they are within the parameters that were approved the EDC does not have to come back to the Select Board.

D. Municipal Officials Responsibilities & Guidelines

1. Chair Swanson stated that this is not about any actual permits or permitting. The Select Board received a letter about two weeks ago involving letters between neighbor to neighbor which would ordinarily be a neighbor dispute. However, this was brought to the Select Board's attention because the Select Board oversees the various committees and commissions that

are part of the Town government. The letter identified the writers of the letter by their positions. They have a conflict of interest policy. These individuals would have to recuse themselves from any decisions if the permits came to their boards. However, there is nothing for the Select Board to do at this time.

E. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

1. Addition – additional executive session

F. Manager's report

1. Mr. Yennerell stated that a part-time Planning & Zoning Assistant has been hired. This person will average about 25 hours weekly and will assist in the Manager's Office when people are absent.

G. Permits

1. Liquor license application – Brasserie – 4 Mechanic LLC – Au Comptoir

Motion: by Ms. Ford to approve the liquor license application for Au Comptoir as submitted.

Seconded: by Mr. Bourgeois.

Discussion: none.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

H. New business

1. Approve FY23 tax rate

Motion: by Mr. Bourgeois to approve the Town tax rate of 0.6549.

Seconded: by Ms. Ford.

Discussion: none.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

2. Authorized Representative Update form

a. Chair Swanson stated that this is for the loan documents for the South Woodstock Wastewater Treatment Facility Refurbishment Project.

Motion: by Ms. Ford to approve the signing of the appointment of alternate authorized representative as Tom Yennerell.

Seconded: by Mr. Bourgeois.

Discussion: none.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

I. Other business – none.

J. Executive session to discuss appointments for Town Historic Preservation Commission and the Town Manager Search Committee

Motion: by Ms. Ford to enter executive session at 6:35 pm.

Seconded: by Mr. Bourgeois.

Discussion: none.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

The Select Board exited executive session and resumed the public meeting at 6:55 pm.

Motion: by Ms. Ford to appoint Matthew Powers and Douglas Keleher to the Town Historic Preservation Commission.

Seconded: by Mr. Bourgeois.

Discussion: none.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

Motion: by Mr. Bourgeois to appoint Ms. Ford to the Town Manager Search Committee.  
Seconded: by Chair Swanson.  
Discussion: none.  
Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

Motion: by Mr. Ford to appoint Mr. Bourgeois to the Town Manager Search Committee.  
Seconded: by Chair Swanson.  
Discussion: none.  
Vote: 3-0-0, passed.

K Approval of minutes - tabled

1. 7/19/22 minutes

2. 7/29/22 joint minutes

L Adjournment

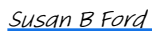
Motion: by Mr. Bourgeois to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 pm.  
Seconded: by Ms. Ford.  
Discussion: none.  
Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,  
Nikki Nourse

  
Joseph Swanson (Sep 7, 2022 14:15 EDT)

  
Raymond Bourgeois (Sep 8, 2022 09:19 EDT)

  
Keri P. Cole (Sep 8, 2022 09:26 EDT)

  
Susan B Ford (Sep 9, 2022 17:05 EDT)

Delivered at the meeting add to packet  
T.Y. 8/16

**Statement from Howard Krum and Mary Margaret Sloan to the Woodstock Select Board  
August 16, 2022**

You have our detailed written response to the Peirce's false claims – however, just yesterday we found out that they have egregiously violated our Town regulations. They began work more than 3 weeks before they were legally allowed. Their permit is dated June 6<sup>th</sup> and states “This permit shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date hereof”, meaning that no land development was allowed to begin until June 21<sup>st</sup>. However, we have proof that they began clearcutting in May – I have pictures of their land already stripped bare before the June 6<sup>th</sup> permit was even issued. This means that their Town and State violations began even before day one. This is a very serious matter that we urge the Town to vigorously pursue.

By completing the illegal clearcutting even before they were issued a permit, we (and our neighbors, the NPS, and all Gilbert's Hill visitors) were denied our right to object to and appeal the permit application — tonight we are officially declaring our intent to appeal the original building permit decision.

We all know what's going on with this letter — the Peirces are trying to distract everyone from the environmental impacts of their actions and them breaking the law. They illegally clearcut more than 175,000 square feet of pristine forest to bare earth in a State that has a strong commitment to conservation, and a Town with an equally strong commitment to its scenery, and they did so without the proper permits.

To specifically address their allegations, Howard and I have done nothing wrong:

- There is no conflict of interest – Under the Policy, because the Peirce's property won't be coming before either of the committees we serve on, a conflict of interest is simply not possible. I point you to Article 4, Sec A, which defines Conflict of Interest as involving either a financial interest (there is none here) or a quasi-judicial proceeding (there is none here either).
- We didn't abuse any power because we have none in this case. The only ones who have power are the Peirces themselves, the State of Vermont, and you – the Town of Woodstock. We in fact begged the Peirces to act responsibly and mitigate the environmental and scenic damage they've caused.
- We aren't against thoughtful development, we're just against the indiscriminate destruction of Woodstock's environmental and scenic resources.

Gilbert's Hill is not only our home, it's also a national treasure, contributing to Woodstock's economy for nearly 100 years. It's on the National Historic Register and is protected by easements through the Vermont Land Trust, the Preservation Trust of Vermont and the Green Mountain Club – no one can ever develop our land, and it is open for public recreation. Hundreds of donors, including folks in this room, came together to protect the history and the scenery of this landmark. It's why we are so passionate about protecting the Prosper Valley, and why we joined the Planning and Conservation Commissions. We shouldn't be afraid to speak up because a new neighbor tries to defame us personally and publicly.

As you can imagine, the Peirces' unfounded accusations are deeply troubling to us.

We ask you to:

- reject their letter and defend us – and all of the Town's dedicated volunteers,
- affirm that we did nothing that violates any regulation and declare that you support our right as citizens to speak up to protect Woodstock,
- champion our right to appeal the original permit, and
- issue another Town stop-work order and pursue all legal recourse for their permit violations

(Also, we have one edit to our previous letter – Rick Kendall, NPS Park Superintendent met with the Town twice on this matter, not once, and when he learned that the Town had reached out to the ANR and the state had taken action, so he didn't need to.)

Delivered at the meeting Add to packet  
T.Y.  
8/16

August 16, 2022

To whom it may concern,

My name is Wendy Seiple and I've lived at my address in the Prosper Valley for over 20 years. My guess is most of you don't know me as I'm not involved in local politics or committees or boards. Public speaking is not my thing and being here today is out of my comfort zone. However, what is happening in the Prosper Valley since late Spring has been so devastating, shocking, and heartbreaking that I have to find answers, stand up, and be heard.

When I first moved to Leonard Lane (then Gully Road), Rabbit Hill Way didn't exist. The hillside was untouched. Over the years the road was put in and houses were built. Though, of course, I would've loved for the hillside to remain untouched, I also understand that new construction is inevitable. I haven't felt the need to come before the Town to raise concerns about the houses that have been built on Rabbit Hill Way thus far.

This is different.

What is happening now at 0 Rabbit Hill Way is best described as a gaping wound on the side of the hill. I first heard the sounds of clear-cutting in late May. It's not an entirely new sound or experience because as I've said there are other homes on the hillside that have involved clear-cutting and construction. However, to say the clear-cutting that happened here was rapid and aggressive is an understatement. In the span of just a few days, the scenic hillside was recklessly deforested. The environmental impact is utterly heartbreaking and could have been avoided (other developments on the hillside have not to my awareness caused devastation to the hillside).

Sadly, it's probably too late for the Prosper Valley. The damage is done. What I want to do is find out how this happened in the first place? If I give the Peirces and Town officials the benefit



of the doubt, all this was done with the proper permitting and zoning orders. If that is the case, then I want to know how to put new guardrails in place so this doesn't happen elsewhere in Woodstock. We are a community built on the history of thoughtful stewardship of the land. The irony of this particular project is that it is happening in the shadow of our beloved national park. In fact, to share the words one of Woodstock's respected ancestors, George Perkins Marsh, "Steep hillsides and rocky ledges are well suited to the permanent growth of wood, but when in the rage for improvement they are improvidently stripped of this protection, the action of sun and wind and rain soon deprives them of their vegetable mould . . . They remain thereafter barren . . . producing neither grain nor grass." I believe that the deforestation of O Rabbit Hill way will lead to the very outcome Mr. Marsh warned us about.

I am educating myself about the protocols that are in place (or not) for residential development in Woodstock. I've been naïve and ignorant in assuming our most precious asset, the land, was under some sort of mindful protection. I am in support of new construction, but I want to ensure that it's done in a way that doesn't damage the beauty, hillsides, and ecosystems that we all take for granted. I don't know if this Board is the place to start or what exactly the role is of the Town and its officials in making these sorts of decisions, but I assure you there is growing alarm amongst the community about what has transpired. I don't know if O Rabbit Hill Way is the canary in the coal mine, or if it's the coal mine and we're too late to stop this from happening elsewhere? I do know that my neck of the woods, the Prosper Valley, like the rest of Woodstock, is worth protecting.

In addition, I'm very concerned about the unfounded personal accusations the Peirces have launched against my neighbors, Mary Margaret Sloan and Howard Krum. Mary Margaret and Howard have lived in the Prosper Valley for many years and have been exceptional stewards of their historic land on Gilbert Hill. The Town of Woodstock is so fortunate to have them share their property with the public while also maintaining and upgrading its land use. In an ironic twist to this, the Peirces new (and protected) view will be of Mary Margaret and Howard's beautiful hillside. Furthermore, having read through everything the Peirces submitted to the

Select Board, I fail to see any conflict of interest between the volunteer roles Mary Margaret and Howard hold and their reasonable concern over the nature in which the Peirces project is unfolding. Mary Margaret and Howard, like me and our other neighbors, are rightly concerned about this new and aggressive level of clear-cutting on the hillside in our valley. If we don't react as concerned neighbors, then who will?

The accusations of abuse of power are an attempt at intimidation and silencing that, clearly, didn't work. If this Board is truly interested in witnessing an abuse of power, I suggest they visit Rabbit Hill Way. To that end, I've brought with me a photo of the work thus far as this is probably the most effective way for you all to see the full extent of the clear-cutting and environmental damage inflicted on Rabbit Hill, as well as the obvious and devastating loss of scenic beauty in the Prosper Valley.

Respectfully yours,

Wendy Seiple


















# 8.16.22 SB Minutes

Final Audit Report

2022-09-09

Created:	2022-09-07
By:	Nicole Nourse (nnourse@townofwoodstock.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAAn0vL7D9ldSHBbHopB3VbOyR9zhovKRcK

## "8.16.22 SB Minutes" History

-  Document created by Nicole Nourse (nnourse@townofwoodstock.org)  
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-  Document emailed to jswanson@townofwoodstock.org for signature  
2022-09-07 - 5:17:30 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by jswanson@townofwoodstock.org  
2022-09-07 - 6:14:46 PM GMT- IP address: 73.68.200.248
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-  Document e-signed by Joseph Swanson (jswanson@townofwoodstock.org)  
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-  Document emailed to rbourgeois@townofwoodstock.org for signature  
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-  Document e-signed by Raymond Bourgeois (rbourgeois@townofwoodstock.org)  
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Signature Date: 2022-09-09 - 9:05:25 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 198.55.239.86

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