

Town & Village of Woodstock
Select Board & Board of Trustees Joint Meeting
November 29, 2023
6:00 pm
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Chair Ray Bourgeois, Susan Ford, Keri Cole, Greg Fullerton, Laura Powell, Chair Seton McIlroy, Jeffrey Kahn, Brenda Blakeman, Eric Duffy, Nikki Nourse, Peggy Fraser, Wendy Marrinan, Lauren Dorsey, Jon Spector, Jill Davies

A. Call to order

1. Select Board

- a. Chair Bourgeois called the joint meeting of November 29, 2023, to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Trustees

- a. Chair McIlroy called the joint meeting of November 29, 2023, to order at 6:00 pm.

B. Discussions

1. Conflict of interest policies

- a. Discussed updates to their conflict of interest policies. The Boards decided to unify the policy for both the Town and the Village, with any elected official becoming an employee of the Town/Village either appointed or as an employee-at will being required to resign from their elected position. The Boards also agreed that a Town/Village employee cannot serve on the Select Board or as a Trustees. The Boards plan to vote on this updated policy at their respective December meetings.

2. FY25 budget

- a. There was discussion about the budget. Mr. Duffy emphasized the importance of accuracy in the budget figures before making changes.
- b. Mr. Duffy discussed the budgeting process, emphasizing both Board's visions for the municipality and its impact on the budget. The future budget goals include creating a more accurate budget that reflects departmental needs and promotes successful operations, while ensuring adequate services for residents. Mr. Duffy also explored the potential benefits of using new software to increase efficiency, lower costs, and enhance transparency in government operations. He acknowledged the need to consider the impact of any increased cost on residents and highlighted the need for creating comprehensible budgets to increase transparency.
- c. Mr. Duffy discussed several cuts and proposals. The plan to hire a 3rd employee in Planning and Zoning was cut from the budget. He also decided against purchasing permit software and a retention bonus for the Fire Department. He did propose a \$20,000 plan for short-term rental software, with the potential to generate additional revenue. He also suggested the creation of a new position, possibly an assistant to the Boards, to alleviate some workload.

- d. Mr. Duffy noted a 4.2% increase in the Town's budget, a 5.6% increase in the Village's budget, and a 17.34% increase in the sewer's budget. He expressed a belief that the current budget is overly restrictive and proposed a 3-5 year project to gradually adjust the budget to better reflect Woodstock's needs. The goal is to finalize the balanced budget by the end of December.
- e. Mr. Duffy held a discussion about the budget setup, emphasizing transparency and accessibility to all who wish to review it. He also discussed the revenue projection sheet, its various sources, and how these revenues can be manipulated into the Excel sheet. He invited the Boards to review and suggest changes.
- f. Mr. Duffy highlighted the importance of understanding how changes in 1 department's budget could affect the entire budget due to the interconnectedness of all budgets. He also emphasized the significance of salaries and benefits in the budget, which make up the majority and are largely set by union contracts. He encouraged board members to familiarize themselves with the budget creation process and invited further high-level questions and suggestions for budget adjustments.
- g. Mr. Spector discussed the development of a long-term financial model, which will allow predicting tax rates based on future capital investments. The Finance Committee and the EDC will discuss potential growth, especially building more structures to lower tax rates for all residents. Mr. Spector also emphasized the importance of strategic planning and financing modeling, with a model expected to be completed in the next few months. They plan to analyze 2 main projects, the water company and wastewater treatment plant. The idea of regionalization for fire and police services was brought up as a cost-management strategy. They also discussed the potential of technology and automation for cost reduction and revenue opportunities.

C. Other business – none.

D. Adjournment

1. Select Board

Motion: by Chair Bourgeois to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Seconded: by Ms. Cole.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

2. Trustees

Motion: by Chair McIlroy to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Seconded: by Mr. Kahn.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Nikki Nourse*