

**Town of Woodstock
Select Board Meeting
December 19, 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, Eric Duffy, Nikki Nourse, Peggy Fraser, Lisa Lawlor, Janet English, Thomas Degiaromo, Kathleen Eiselein, Tom Ayres, Patrick Killackey, Wendy Spector, Emmett Norton, Elliot Rubin, Tesha Buss, Lauren Dorsey, Sue Kancir, Pamela Fraser, Suzanne Wooten, Neil Lamson, Matt Lombard, Alison Clarkson, Roger Logan, Jennifer Falvey, Seton McIlroy, Jamie Ziobro, Ben Ford, Lydia Locke, Marlena McNamera, David Hill, Jon Spector, Jeffrey Kahn, Jill Hastings, Liz Fraser, Paige Rand, Lucille McCarthy, Jan Dembinski, Josh Roylance, Mark Weinstein, Meg Roylance, Steven Thomas, Cynthia Stevens, Carol Wood, Jill Davies, Susie Stulz, Susan Neuberg

A. Call to order

1. Chair Bourgeois called the Select Board Meeting of December 19, 2023, to order at 6:00 pm.

B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

1. Deletion – financial report.

C. Citizen comments – none.

D. Presentations

1. Elected Representatives, Tesha Buss & Alison Clarkson – school tax

- a. Discussion included diverse revenue sources for education, not limited to property taxes but encompassing meals and rooms, sales, Medicaid, Lottery, etc.
- b. Deliberation on non-homestead education property tax, emphasizing the significant contribution to the education fund in 2023.
- c. Highlighted the value of Woodstock schools, emphasizing offerings like advanced placement, sports programs, and after-school activities.
- d. Emphasized the role of schools in shaping the local economy by attracting professionals like doctors, nurses, and teachers.
- e. Clarification on the fiscal year and budget considerations for fiscal year 2025, emphasizing a delayed Debt Service initiation.
- f. Discussed plans to align with growing enrollment, build infrastructure, and foresee a decline in tax rates.
- g. Emphasized the significant contribution from the education fund and clarified misconceptions about non-homestead taxpayers.
- h. Consideration of tax rate increments due to bond payments and comparisons with other town tax rates.
- i. Initial cost estimation, value engineering, and reductions in the budget to align with infrastructure needs.

- j. Recognition of infrastructure challenges and the need for long-term planning beyond the assumed infrastructure longevity.
- k. Discussion on the 5% cap on equalized tax rate for the upcoming five years and its impact on taxpayers.
- l. Addressing concerns about the impact of increased tax rates on young families moving into the town.

E. Votes

1. Drug & alcohol policy

- a. The Select Board discussed the drug and alcohol policy and potential changes recommended by VLCT. The Board decided to follow VLCT's recommendations and suggested a correction to Selectboard.

Motion: by Ms. Powell to approve the drug and alcohol policy with the correction noted above.

Seconded: by Ms. Ford.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

2. Errors and omission to 2023 Lodged grand list

Motion: by Ms. Powell to approve the errors and omission to 2023 lodged grand list.

Seconded: by Ms. Cole.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

3. Liquor license renewal – F.H. Gillingham & Sons Inc

Motion: by Ms. Ford to approve the liquor license renewal for F.H. Gillingham & Sons Inc with the understanding that the State reviews and approves it.

Seconded: by Ms. Cole.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

4. Town Hall – subcommittee – appoint members

- a. The Select Board held a discussion about the ongoing issues at the Town Hall building, which has needed infrastructural improvements since 1997. They decided to form a committee comprising of Ms. Powell, Chair Bourgeois, and Mr. Duffy to find solutions to these problems, including HVAC, accessibility, and structural integrity. The Committee plans to build on the findings of two previous committees and present three options for the Board's consideration, with the final option to be recommended before next budget season. The evaluation criteria for the options include administrative aspects, public accessibility, civic criteria, sense of place, and affordability.

5. ARPA

Motion: by Ms. Cole to allocate \$71,000 in ARPA funds for the Carleton Hill Road project.

Seconded: by Ms. Powell.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

F. Discussions

1. Calendar of events for the SB

- a. The Select Board decided to implement a timeline for discussing various topics throughout the year, assigning the creation of this timeline to a working committee.

- 2. Discussion of non-profits presenting on their budget (if they receive money via Town budget)

- a. The idea of making non-profit financial discussions a yearly tradition was discussed.

3. South Woodstock design update

- a. Ms. Ford mentioned that progress has been slow, but they are hopeful that the Vermont State College may be able to provide fresh ideas. Mr. Fullerton discussed fence coverings and potentially reducing the size of the facility's fence.

4. Town Meeting prep

- a. The Select Board discussed potential changes to the Town's annual meeting day, focusing on the voting method. The Town Clerk discovered an ordinance from 1981 that requires all measures except officers to be voted on the floor. The Vermont State Legislatures Act One was also mentioned, which allows the legislative body of a town to vote by Australian ballot on Town Meeting this year. The Town had a historical low turnout in the previous year, which was less than 3%.

5. Sewer ordinance discussion

- a. They discussed potential changes in ordinances and subsequent implications for future decision-making processes.
- b. The Select Board discussed a proposed renovation for the main wastewater plant and the question of who would pay for it. The Board considered changing the ordinance to clarify payment responsibilities, a process that would take at least two meetings and two months. The Board also discussed changing the ordinance language, but the questions of who would pay and how much remained unresolved.

G. Other business – none.

H. Approval of minutes

1. 11/21/23 minutes

- a. Chair to send out draft agenda to other Board members.

2. 11/29/23 joint minutes

Motion: by Ms. Powell to approve the minutes for 11/21/23 and 11/29/23 with the one change mentioned above.

Seconded: by Ms. Cole.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

I. Adjournment

Motion: by Ms. Cole to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 pm.

Seconded: by Ms. Powell.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Nikki Nourse*