

**Town of Woodstock
Select Board Meeting
February 20, 2024
6:00 pm
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Ray Bourgeois, Susan Ford, Keri Cole, Greg Fullerton, Eric Duffy, Nikki Levakis, Sara Houasse, Sherry Sousa, Derek DeMas, Lauren Dorsey, Benjamin Brickner, Hannah Eames, Karim Houry, Wendy Marrinan, Tom Meyerhoff, Cynthia Volk, Christopher McCown, Hayley Bauer, Alex Wilson, Ben Ford, Roger Logan, Thomas McCaughey, Bill Corson, Seton McIlroy, Jenny Silva, David Hill, Kristian Kurtzhalz, Chris Henderson, Annie Mears, Susie Stulz, Carol Wood, Mary Riley, Jon Spector, PJ Eames, Steven Bauer, Todd Ulman, Jill Davies, Mollie Duckworth, Clay Duckworth, Nancy Nutile-McMenery

A. Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Select Board meeting of February 20th to order at 6:00 pm.

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda – none.

C. Citizen comments

1. There was a discussion about the potential use of EDC funds for infrastructure projects in Woodstock.
 - a. Karim Houry suggested using half of the average \$300,000 EDC funds to create reserves for future infrastructure needs or to tackle immediate needs related to economic development.
 - b. Wendy Marrinan expressed her support for Karim's suggestion.
 - c. Eric Duffy mentioned that the Board's will have a discussion about goals and objectives in April, which would be a good time to bring up this topic.

D. Manager's report

1. Eric informed residents about the sewer bills that had been sent out and encouraged early payment to avoid late charges.

E. Presentations

1. School Committee – new building project

- a. Ben Ford, a member of the School Board provided updates on recent developments.
- b. Ben discussed the progress of the project, noting the completion of value engineering in late December and removal of 16.5 million dollars from the project scope, resulting in total savings.
- c. A 99 billion dollar bond is on the ballot for March 5th.
- d. The State released new square foot standards for construction aid, to which the school's project conformed.

- e. The Board of Education reviewed other school projects and determined their project to be cheaper than others.
- f. The received approval to continue as a site for a middle school and high school building.
- g. They shared an online calculator to help residents understand the potential impact of the bond.
- h. They discussed potential impact of the bond.
- i. They discussed potential consolidation in the region, with Woodstock being designated as a hub for future consolidation.
- j. They discussed budget cuts made in the school project, which amounted to a total of \$12 million in savings.
- k. The final design of the building was discussed, highlighting the decision to cut the turf field and other architectural features to reduce costs.
- l. The final design includes \$650 per square foot, which is lower than other recent school projects around the State.
- m. The website's tax impact calculator, allowing users to input various factor to calculate their home's fair market value.
- n. The calculator also considers project overruns and their impact on tax rates.
- o. The school's fundraising efforts for the school project having raised \$3.5 million and received a \$25,000 grant, were discussed.
- p. Various scenarios, including borrowing \$99 billion at a 3.6% interest rate over 40 years, were presented.
- q. Concerns about the average tax increase for education and plans for future fundraising were addressed.
- r. The question of approaching the Rockefellers for a donation was raised and responded to.
- s. The school discussed the potential cost of demolishing the old school, which is part of the \$99 billion bond amount.
- t. Concerns were raised about the impact on local businesses and second homeowners, with clarification that the school district would receive a larger allocation form the State Education Fund.
- u. There was also a discussion on the distribution of tax rates among homestead property taxpayers, businesses, and second homeowners.
- v. The importance of not cutting programs that attract students was emphasized.
- w. Renovations can only be financed for a maximum of 30 years, which could lead to higher tax rates.
- x. The discussion also touched on the presence of asbestos and oil mitigation under the boiler room.

F. Votes

1. Bond Street

- a. Mollie Duckworth and Clay Duckworth introduced themselves as the new owners of 3 Bond Street and 4 Bond Street, expressing their love for the property's history and their plans for it.
- b. Mollie and Clay discussed the need to modify the house and establish the width of the road, with a proposal to establish the width of the road at 1 ¼ rods.
- c. They proposed adding a sidewalk to the road with curbing.
- d. The estimated cost of their changes was approximately \$150,000 with the owners expected to cover a majority of the expenses.
- e. They were hoping to start the project around 2027-2028, with the need for a crosswalk across Pleasant Street also discussed.
- f. The discussion was tabled until Mark Hunter and Fire Chief David Green could provide feedback.
- g. Tabled.

2. Sewer abatement requests

- a. Jakbar LLC – 217102f Maxham Meadow Way
 - i. Jakbar LLC owner discussed receiving a sewer tax bill for outstanding taxes from before their property purchase.
 - ii. They requested assistance and hoped for an abatement, but Susan Ford suggested it was their attorney's responsibility.

Motion: by Keri Cole to approve the sewer abatement request for 217102f Maxham Meadow Way to abate penalty and interest.

Seconded: by Laura Powell.

Vote: 4-1-0, passed. (Chair Bourgeois for, Keri for, Greg Fullerton for, Laura for, Susan against)

b. 7 Stanton Street

- i. Alex Wilson from 5 Stanton Street raised concerns about receiving two sewer bills, clarifying that the 2nd bill was intended for a nonexistent property at 7 Stanton Street.
- ii. Alex proposed to remove the bill for 7 Stanton Street, which amounted to a previous balance of \$1,231 and a current new bill of \$642.
- iii. Eric confirmed that the bill for 7 Stanton Street was based on minimum billing as there was no water reading for that property.

Motion: by Keri to approve the sewer abatement request to remove the bills for 7 Stanton Street.

Seconded: by Laura.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

3. Parade permits

- a. Covered Bridges Half Marathon – CBHM Inc

- i. Nancy Nutile-McMenery received approval for a half marathon, which is expected to have 2,000 participants and benefit nonprofit organizations.

Motion: by Keri to approve the parade permit for the Covered Bridges Half Marathon as submitted by CBHM Inc.

Seconded: by Susan.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

b. Prouty Ultimate – Friends of Dartmouth Cancer Center

Motion: by Susan to approve the parade permit for Prouty Ultimate as submitted by Friends of Dartmouth Cancer Center.

Seconded: by Keri.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

4. EDC funding recommendations

- a. The EDC held its annual meeting where they approved eight out of eleven proposals totaling about \$70,000.
- b. These proposals included funding for various initiatives such as the Wonder Room and a municipal solutions summit, as well as a new event called the Pride of Woodstock High Heal Race.
- c. Several proposals were declined, including one for a social service non-profit and a request to build a public restroom.
- d. They discussed the shuttle service and its funding, noting that it was about the same as last year.

Motion: by Keri to approve the EDC grants for \$70,000.

Seconded: by Susan.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

- e. The EDC discussed a proposal from the housing working group to convert short-term rentals to long-term ones, aiming to add 20 units to the current 11.
- f. The EDC recommended funding of \$87,000 for this program, and an additional \$40,000 was approved for the Housing Advisor.
- g. They allocated \$60,000 for six additional accessory dwelling units but noted potential budget constraints.

Motion: by Laura to approve the Housing Program recommendations for \$187,000 to the above mentioned programs.

Seconded: by Keri.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

5. Sunday Drive (Cannabis Commission)

Motion: by Susan to approve Sunday Drive's permit.

Seconded: by Keri.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

6. Laura Powell (Planning Commission ex-officio)

Motion: by Keri to appoint Laura Powell to the Planning Commission as ex-officio.

Seconded: by Susan.

Vote: 4-0-1, passed. (Chair Bourgeois for, Susan for, Keri for, Greg for, Laura abstained).

7. Letter of intent Woodstock Aqueduct Company

- a. Appreciation was extended to Jon Spector and Charlie Kimbell for their contributions to the Woodstock Aqueduct issues.
- b. In July, Woodstock faced a flood that disrupted portable water supply for 10 days and led to delays in repairs due to ineligibility for FEMA reimbursement.
- c. The Town then considered purchasing the private aqueduct company, which sparked a community discussion.
- d. A working group was formed to investigate the pros and cons of the purchase with the help of Harvard Business School.
- e. They recommended that the Town should acquire the water company, which was favorably considered by the Finance Committee.
- f. Negotiations and due diligence begin with this letter of intent.

Motion: by Keri to approve the signing of the letter of intent to the Woodstock Aqueduct Company.

Seconded: by Susan.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

G. Discussions

1. STR update

- a. The Planning Commission is still working on short-term rental policies, aiming to promote public health, safety, and balance the needs of property owners and neighbors.

2. South Woodstock update

- a. Vermont State University students will be working on the design project expected to present their proposal by early April.

3. Investment Advisory Report

- a. The Rockefeller Endowment Fund was presented, highlighting a 3% decrease in worth since the previous report, but still performing as well as any market investment.
- b. The fund also contributes to the Town and Village's taxes.

4. Informational session update

- a. The Select Board discussed the upcoming informational session, deciding to have a single person monitor and receive questions via chat, and suggest attendees arrive early to test the microphone.

H. Other business – none.

I. Approval of minutes

1. 1/8/24 minutes
2. 1/16/24 minutes
3. 1/23/24 minutes

Motion: by Keri to approve the minutes of 1/8/24, 1/16/24, and 1/23/24 as submitted.

Seconded: by Susan.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

J. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 pm.

Seconded: by Keri.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Nikki Levakis*