

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
November 19th, 2024
6:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Chair Ray Bourgeois, Laura Powell, Greg Fullerton, Susan Ford, Keri Cole

Staff: Eric Duffy

Public: Meghan Landis, Fire Chief David Green, Jill Davies, Antonia Richie, Jon Spector, Greta Calabrese, Roger Logan, Todd Eckert, Joe DiNatale, Reese Brown, Mark Knott, Ben Jervy, Caroline Olsen, Barbara Otranto, Suzanne Wooten, Jeffrey Kahn, Peter Shoemaker, Seton McIlroy

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of November 19th to order at 6:00PM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda

- a. Water Rate Discussion with the Finance Committee
- b. Review water system discussion below Maximum Meadow Way
- c. Discussion about a conservation easement on the Vondell Reservoir
- d. Discussion about December meeting and having our state representatives present to talk about taxes

C. Citizen Comments – none

D. Manager's Report (6:01PM)

Eric Duffy announced a reminder regarding the bond vote on December 10 to acquire the Vondell Reservoir and related projects, with absentee ballots available at the clerk's office.

Eric Duffy mentioned an informational session on Thursday December 5th at 6PM at Town Hall and on Zoom, before the December 10th vote on the bond for the Vondell Reservoir

Wassail weekend December 13-14

Town Hall Closed for Thanksgiving and the day after

E. Votes

Planning Commission – Meghan Landis

Ray Bourgeois introduced Meghan Landis, who provided a brief background on her architecture and interior design experience.

Meghan Landis expressed her interest in getting more involved with the community and shaping Woodstock's village and town positively.

Ray Bourgeois asked if Meghan Landis has attended any meetings, to which she responds she has attended one planning commission meeting.

Motion: by Susan Ford to appoint Meghan Landis to the Planning Commission
(6:05PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed.

E911 Road Name Change (6:06PM)

A road name change from Reading Road to Mount Moses Trail is discussed

Motion: by Susan Ford to change the name of Reading Road to Mount Moses Trail.
(6:07PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 4-0-0, passed.

Route 4- High School sign/speed limit (6:07PM)

Eric Duffy presented a request from the high school superintendent for signage and reduced speed limits in front of the high school to improve safety.

The board discussed the possibility of adding a crosswalk and flashing lights, with some members expressing support for these measures.

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the speed limit and signage and considered the addition of a crosswalk and flashing sign (6:12PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 4-0-0, passed.

Ambulance Billing per Capita Funds (6:13PM)

The board discussed and approved the annual subscription rate for EMS services, with a focus on maintaining consistent rates for member towns.

Olmstead Contract- For Town Forest

Eric Duffy presented the Olmsted contract renewal, which includes a request to include road repair costs for heavy trucks using Long Hill.

The board agreed to include language in the contract acknowledging the additional wear and tear on roads caused by heavy trucks.

ARPA reallocation (6:18pm)

Eric Duffy discussed ARPA reallocation, mentioning he wants all the contract in by December. He mentioned a bill for South Woodstock beautification which is a painting project that will not be finished before December.

Motion: by Susan Ford use the unallocated money from the South Woodstock Wastewater Treatment Plant improvements to pay toward the tower, with the understanding that the painting of the tank will be done from general funds.

(6:20PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed.

EDC – Website subscription funds (6:20PM)

Jon Spector and Greta Calabrese discussed the need for a technical website maintenance contract of \$2,500 to ensure the website remains functional.

Motion: Laura Powell to approve a \$2,500 allocation for a six-month hourly contract to maintain the website (6:22PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 4-0-0, passed.

Greta Calabrese presented the case for a new website build, highlighting the current website's high maintenance costs and outdated technology.

The board supported the RFP for a new website build but emphasized the need for the Chamber to meet its responsibilities in maintaining the current website.

F. Discussion

Water Rate Discussion with the Finance Committee (6:33PM)

Laura Powell outlined goals for a new water rate card, including incentivizing meter installation, stratifying rates based on usage, and providing subsidies for affordable housing.

The board discussed the challenges of self-reporting usage for non-metered accounts and the potential for charging based on the number of bedrooms.

Eric Duffy suggested reaching out to the water working group for insights on water rate structure.

The board agreed to have the Finance Committee develop options for water and sewer rates, with a focus on gradual change and long-term planning.

Maxham Meadow Way (6:52PM)

Reese Brown and Mark Knott discussed the need for the town to take over the maintenance of Maxham Meadow Way, citing the road's public use and the current association's inability to manage it.

Laura Powell and Susan Ford expressed concerns about the lack of authorization from the road association and the need to involve all private property owners.

The board tabled the discussion until proper authorization is obtained from the road association.

Motion: by Susan Ford to table the discussion until proper authorization is obtained from the road association. (7:05PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed.

Sewer Update

Eric Duffy provided an update on the wastewater plant renovation project, mentioning potential cost savings with new technology.

The board agreed to have Hoyle Tanner present at the next meeting to discuss the potential cost savings and seek feedback before moving forward with a bond vote.

FY26 Budget discussion

Eric Duffy discussed the next FY26 budget, mentioning a kickoff meeting with the board and the finance team's revamped budget.

Water System Update (7:10PM)

Susan Ford talked about a separate bond to purchase of the Vondell for \$1.6 million, mentioning conversations with the Vermont Land Trust and potential town forest grants.

Susan Ford explained the Town forest grants and the possibility of privately fundraising to help with the purchase.

Eric Duffy sought clarity on the implications of the town voting to have the land trust involved, and Susan Ford explained the development restrictions and recreation use allowed under a conservation easement.

Barbara Otranto questioned the decision to hold back developmental rights on 80 acres, suggesting that planning for the future should stop any development.

Susan Ford explained the potential future flexibility for the town, including the possibility of selling acreage for development if needed.

Laura Powell supported the idea of pursuing discussions with the land trust, emphasizing the importance of future flexibility.

Eric Duffy clarified that the December 10 vote will be for the bond up to 1.6 million for the Vondell, and the board can decide later if they want to pursue an easement.

Roger Logan suggested holding back developable areas for potential multi-family housing, which Susan Ford agrees with, emphasizing no plans for immediate development.

Antonia Richie inquired about approaching the Nature Conservancy for potential grants, and Susan Ford mentioned informal discussions.

Antonia Richie also raised concerns about the lack of public discussion on the listserv regarding Vondell, and Susan Ford explains ongoing efforts to inform the community.

Jeffrey Kahn asked about the water section of the Vondell and restrictions in the future, Susan Ford clarifies that the grant previously discussed is a Forest grant, and the language of the grant would allow use of the Vondell in the future for water if needed.

Eric Duffy clarified that the bond for \$1.6 million is for both water and conservation purposes, and the Selectboard is putting money aside for a new well at \$700,000.

Laura Powell emphasized that the bond is for multiple uses, including conservation and recreation, and not solely for water.

Barbara Otranto and Laura Powell discussed the need for clarification on the bond's purpose and the potential development of the land.

Laura Powell presented a new proposal for bond allocation, suggesting that the Vondell be paid for by all taxpayers and the water projects by users only.

The slideshow started with the two articles that will be voted on December 10th,

1. The bond purchase of property known as the Vondell for up to \$1.6 Million
2. To finance the debt required to do the following projects for up to \$6.7M
 - a. Replace the water main from the storage tank to the Rec Center bridge (1B) \$5M
 - b. New well and pump to replace well #005 (\$800,000)
 - c. Elm Street water main suspension (\$900,000)

Eric Duffy calculated the annual cost for taxpayers and users, estimating a \$114 increase per year for all taxpayers.

Ray Bourgeois and Peter Shoemaker discussed the impact of hydrant fees on the budget and the need to include public service buildings in the allocation.

Eric Duffy clarifies that hydrant fees are currently paid by all taxpayers and would continue to be under the proposed allocation.

The board agreed to reconvene on Thursday morning to further discuss and finalize the bond allocation.

G. Approval Minutes

Motion: by Susan Ford to approve the minutes from 10.08.24, 10.15.24, 10.23.24, 11.04.24, 11.08.24 (8:21PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the minutes from 10.03.24 (8:21PM)

Seconded: by Ray Bourgeois

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

H. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (8:21PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar