

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
Special Informational Session
December 5th, 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, Kitty Mears Koar

Public: Mike Moriarty, Sarah West

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of December 5th to order at 6:00PM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda -none

C. Citizen Comments – none

D. Discussion

Presentation of water capital improvements and Vondell Property

Laura Powell introduced herself and explained the purpose of the meeting, which is to provide information on the upcoming bond vote.

Laura Powell outlined the two articles on the ballot: one for bonding the purchase of the Vondell Reservoir property for up to \$1.6 million and another for financing infrastructure projects for up to \$6.7 million.

The first article involves bonding the purchase of the Vondell property, a 358-acre parcel used for hiking, mountain biking, birding, and fishing.

The property is currently enrolled in the state's current use program, which allows for grants towards conservation and recreation if the town owns it.

Laura Powell noted that with our acquisition of the water company, we retain easements to the tank and the use of the water in the reservoirs as it exists currently, regardless of ownership.

The board has agreed to bring the option to purchase the Vondell to the voters per the terms acquisition with the Woodstock Aqueduct Company.

The property has ecological importance and is designated as high-priority lands by Fish and Wildlife.

The Vondell was a source of drinking water until 1988 and could be reincorporated into the system in the future if needed due to climate change.

The property is used for recreational activities, including mountain biking trails developed by the Woodstock Area Mountain Bike Association and fishing by Vermont Fish and Game.

The town is working with the Vermont Land Trust and private donors to secure funding for the bond.

Susan Ford mentioned the Vermont Land Trust potential grant of \$150,000 or more, which would help the town own the property.

The cost to buy the Vondell is estimated at \$12.71 per \$100,000 of assessed value per year, with the highest payment in the first year.

Eric Duffy clarified that the interest rate used for the estimate could fluctuate based on the rate in March.

The cost does not include the possibility of grants or donations, making it the maximum possible amount.

The payment will decrease each year as the interest is paid off.

The second article involves financing infrastructure projects, with the biggest project being the replacement of the water main from the storage tank to the Rec Center bridge. The project will also address fire flow deficiencies by bringing most fire hydrants into compliance with state standards.

The current 8-inch service pipe will be replaced with a 12-inch pipe, which will help mitigate water loss within the system.

The payments will be based on assessed property value, with an estimated cost of \$11.75 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

The Selectboard has tasked the Finance Committee with developing a new rate card for both water and sewer rates.

The budget includes employee salaries, maintenance and repairs, a capital reserve fund, and other necessary expenses.

The vote will be done by Australian ballot on Tuesday December 10th, with voting hours from 7 AM to 7 PM at Town Hall.

Absentee ballots can be requested from the clerk's office starting tomorrow.

Mike Moriarty, Sarah West, and Kitty Mears Koar asked questions, and Eric Duffy, Susan Ford and Laura Powell provided detailed answers to these questions, clarifying the budget, the allocation of costs, and the potential benefits of the projects.

Eric Duffy thanked the Select Board and the community for their participation and support throughout the process.

Laura Powell reiterates the importance of supporting both bonds for the future of the town and its water system.

Adjournment

Motion: by Greg Fullerton to adjourn the meeting at (6:38PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar