

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
December 17th, 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: Roger Logan, Susie Stulz, Phil Robertson, Jill Davies, Byron Kelly, Rebecca White, Joe Major, Alison Clarkson, Jon Spector, Jon Olin, Kirsten Dipietro-Worden, Charlie Kimbell, Susie Marco, Marc Weinstein, Linda Willinson

A. Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of December 17th to order at 6:00PM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda

a. Permitting Software

1. Website updates

b. APRA Resolution

1. curative validation resolution

C. Citizen Comments – no

D. Manager's Report

Eric Duffy thanks the Public Works crew for their efforts during the recent weather conditions and welcomes Molly Maxham to Town Hall as the Land Use Coordinator

Eric Duffy announced early closing of Town Hall for a holiday party at 2:45PM on December 19th

E. Votes

Permit Software

Eric Duffy introduced the recommendation for iWorq software, which will help with online permitting and communication.

Motion: by Susan Ford to approve the iWorq permitting Software (6:04PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Eric Duffy discussed the proposal to redo the town's website by Eco Pixel, emphasizing ADA compliance and improved communication.

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve Eco Pixel website update to make it ADA
Complainant (6:07PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

ARPA Resolution

Eric Duffy explained the need for a resolution to allocate \$20,000 for IT services under the American Rescue Plan Act.

Ray Bourgeois read the resolution for American Rescue Plan Act opera funds allocation, which includes \$20,000 for permitting software and website updates.

Curative Validation Resolution

Eric Duffy introduced the curative validation resolution due to a missed publication for the bond vote.

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the Curative Validation Resolution
(6:15PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

E. Discussion

Two Rivers- Shared Energy Coordinator program for FY26.

Eric Duffy requested a vote to renew the agreement with Two Rivers for the energy coordinator, with a 3% increase.

The board approved the continuation of the shared energy coordinator Harry Falconer for FY25.

Motion: by Susan Ford continue with our contribution to the shared energy for FY26
(6:19PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Town Report Dedication

Eric Duffy asked for a dedication for the town report, with Susan Ford suggesting Eddie English.

EDC's ADU

Jill Davies announced a grant for an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) project, with a rental agreement for three years to a local worker.

Finance Committee Update on "Rate Card"

The Finance Committee presented the work plan for the rate card project, including gathering information, constructing a financial model, and seeking public input.

Hoyle Tanner- Main wastewater plan update

Jon Olin and Kirsten Dipietro-Worden presented the wastewater plant renovation project, discussing the need for a new biological process.

Three alternatives are considered: A2O process, Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR), and Aerobic Granular Sludge (AGS).

Each alternative is evaluated based on its ability to meet future discharge limits, footprint, operating costs, and complexity.

The board expressed interest in AGS technology and its potential benefits for future growth and reduced chemical use.

The board supported moving forward with the PR amendment process to evaluate the AGS technology

The project team will prepare an amendment to the contract and conduct a pilot study if desired

The board appreciates the detailed presentation and the opportunity to consider innovative technologies for the wastewater plant

State House Delegation (7:08PM)

Senator Rebecca White introduces herself and outlines her background and re-election.

Charlie Kimbell and Alison Clarkson also introduced themselves, detailing their respective roles and experience.

Joe Major, the newest member, introduced himself and mentions his current roles and responsibilities.

Susan Ford asked each representative to discuss their top priorities for the upcoming session.

Senator Rebecca White outlined her top three priorities: lowering property taxes, addressing housing issues, and responding to climate change.

She mentioned ongoing work on bills, including reference-based pricing for healthcare and the Kurtz bill for transportation.

Charlie Kimbell shares his journey to running for office and his focus on education financing, school construction, housing, climate change, and healthcare.

Alison Clarkson emphasizes the need for long-term, sustainable education funding, state funding for new school construction, and addressing housing challenges.

Alison Clarkson discussed the challenges of education financing and the need for state funding for new school construction.

She mentioned the Vermont Housing Improvement Program and the need for regional cooperation on climate change.

Joe Major highlighted the importance of affordability and the need for meaningful dialogue with the executive branch to address these issues

The conversation shifted to the impact of property taxes on residents and the need for state aid during expenditures.

Susan Ford and Laura Powell expressed concerns about the burden on taxpayers and the need for relief in education funding.

Roger Logan expressed frustration with the lack of urgency in addressing the affordability crisis for middle-class people in Vermont.

He emphasized the need for concrete solutions and progress to prevent Vermont from turning into New Hampshire.

Susie Marco raised concerns about the impact of school board decisions on property taxes and the need for statewide solutions.

A few members of the public called for action on tax rates, housing affordability, and climate change, emphasizing the need for hope and progress.

Water System Ordinances (8:12PM)

Water System ordinance needs to be decided on by January and then voted, for it to be available to petition.

FY26 budget Discussion

Eric Duffy presented the town's proposed budget, highlighting a 9.2% tax increase to create a balanced budget.

Eric Duffy explained the major increases, including salaries, capital reserves for a new fire engine, and maintenance schedules for Public Works.

The budget does not include a planning and zoning director position, but two new staff members have been hired to support the office.

Susan Ford and Laura Powell discussed the need for a planning and zoning director and the potential impact on housing and development.

The conversation also touches on the efficiency of the Pentangle and the need to revisit the rent and operating budget payments

The discussion included the potential for raising rents for nonprofit organizations and the impact on special articles at Town Meeting

The convention concludes with a commitment to continue discussions and find solutions to the budget and affordability challenges facing the town.

Ray Bourgeois emphasized the need to address culture and recreation funding and the potential for raising employee insurance contributions.

Laura Powell speaks about the challenges of the library's endowment and the impact on taxpayers, questioning the village's tax rate increase.

Eric Duffy responds, noting the 17.5% tax rate and the 6% overall budget increase for the recreation department, emphasizing the need to focus on other areas.

Eric Duffy explained the shared funding structure between the town and village, highlighting the need for joint meetings to discuss budget impacts.

He suggested the need for joint meetings to align budget decisions and avoid significant impacts on the village budget.

Ray Bourgeois and Susan Ford agreed on the need for another meeting to discuss budget decisions before scheduling a joint meeting.

Eric Duffy confirms January 30th as the meeting date, with a 4 PM start time, and emphasizes the importance of addressing budget questions before the meeting.

Charlie Kimbell raised questions about regional government cooperation and the potential benefits of a grant writer for the town.

Eric Duffy acknowledged the potential benefits of a grant writer and discusses the need for intentionality in setting up such a position.

Alison Clarkson emphasized the importance of maintaining cultural treasures like Pentangle and the need for grant writing to reduce local expenses.

F. Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313

Motion: by Chair Ray Bourgeois at go into Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313 to discuss personnel matters(8:44PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 4-0-0, passed (Returned 8:50PM)

G. Approval of Minutes

Motion: by Chair Susan Ford table approval of Minutes

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

H. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (8:50PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar