

Town & Village of Woodstock
Town Selectboard & Village Trustees Special Joint Meeting
February 23rd, 2026
5:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present Selectboard: Chair Ray Bourgeois, Laura Powell, Cliff Johnson, Vice Chair Susan Ford, Keri Cole

Present Trustees: Chair Seton Mcilroy, Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn, Brenda Blakeman, Lisa Lawlor, Frank Horneck

Staff: Eric Duffy

Public: Nicholas Seldon, Willie Mitchell, Keri Bristow, Lesley Watts, Kathy Reynolds, Roger Logan

Call to order

1. Selectboard

- a. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard Meeting of February 23 to order at 5:00 PM

2. Trustees

- a. Chair Seton Mcilroy called the Trustee Meeting of February 23rd to order at 5:00 PM

B. Additions or Deletions from the posted Agenda
Homestead Announcement

C. Citizen Comments – Three Minutes per participant

Nicholas Seldon expressed opposition to any amendment of the Municipal Manager's contract.

Willie Mitchell expressed frustration that the underlying circumstances involving Chief Swanson had never been clearly explained to the public. She noted that with Town Meeting approaching and property taxes are already a significant burden and she could not understand why this matter remained unresolved.

Keri Bristow offered a brief comment attributing the entire sequence of events to a road rage incident.

Leslie Watts stated she had been unaware that a new vote on a contract was anticipated. She asked whether the item before the Board constituted a new contract or an extension, and whether the terms would be made public.

D. Board Comments

In response to questions and concerns raised during Citizen Comment, Laura Powell addressed several points. Regarding the Homestead eligibility questions, Laura Powell stated that all board members had the right to serve and vote in Woodstock, noting that Homestead declarations revised after April result in a revised tax statement that is not immediately reflected online.

On the matter of litigation, Laura Powell stated that on advice of counsel, no comment could be made on ongoing legal proceedings. Regarding the contract Laura Powell directed the public to a press release issued in December outlining the items under evaluation, which included an increase in pay, an increase in vacation time, and flexible work arrangements — all described as reflective of the boards' confidence in Mr. Duffy's management.

Keri Cole and Chair Seton Mcilroy then provided personal statements regarding their own homestead filings. Keri Cole stated she had filed her homestead declaration late due to an accounting oversight, but had done so before the October deadline, and noted that the board had unanimously supported imposing penalties on residents who fail to file correctly. Chair Seton Mcilroy stated she had initially been listed as non-homestead due to an out-of-state accountant, but remedied the situation immediately upon receiving her tax bill and confirmed her homestead and voter registration status were fully in order.

Nicholas Seldon was subsequently permitted a brief follow-up remark

Kathy Reynolds began to raise concerns about board members' residency and compensation costs but was informed that citizen comment was closed.

E. Proposed executive session 1 V.S.A 313

Motion: by Laura Powell to go into a potential executive session 1 V.S.A. § 313 the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, provided that the public body shall make a final decision to hire or appoint a public officer or employee in an open meeting and shall explain the reasons for its final decision during the open meeting; (5:22 PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Chair Seton Mcilroy to go into a potential executive session 1 V.S.A. § 313 the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, provided that the public body shall make a final decision to hire or appoint a public officer or employee in an open meeting and shall explain the reasons for its final decision during the open meeting; (5:22PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Vice Chair Susan Ford to exit executive session (5:33 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Chair Seton Mcilroy to exit executive session (5:33 PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Vote on Municipal Manager's Contract

Motion: by Chair Seton McIlroy to approve the Municipal Manager updated contract (5:33 PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 4-0-1, passed- 1 Abstention. Motion carried.

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the Municipal Manager updated contract (5:33 PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Susan Ford

Vote: 3-0-1, passed- 2 Abstention. Motion carried.

Vice Chair Susan Ford stated that while she supports Eric Duffy and hopes he remains Municipal Manager for years to come, the contract needed to be updated to conform with current employment practices. She indicated that while she supports some new provisions, she could not support others, and therefore felt abstaining was most appropriate.

Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn stated his support for Mr. Duffy's continuation as Municipal Manager but expressed that there were elements of the contract he could not agree with, and wished it to be known that his abstention should not be misconstrued as opposition to Mr. Duffy personally.

Chair Ray Bourgeois then read a formal statement on behalf of the board explaining the rationale for the updated compensation package. The statement noted that the update reflects the Board's satisfaction and confidence in Mr. Duffy's performance following two consecutive positive annual reviews, and that his salary was being adjusted to better align with regional benchmarks. The statement also acknowledged the particular challenges of the role, including supporting two Boards and being subject to legal and physical hazards.

Chair Ray Bourgeois cited a number of achievements since Mr. Duffy assumed the role in February 2023, including: the acquisition of the Woodstock Aqueduct Company and the Vondell Cobb Reservoir, thereby protecting critical infrastructure and doubling the Town's land holdings; successful advocacy for a local option tax that has generated over \$450,000 since adoption; securing full FEMA reimbursements for 2023 flooding damages; and leading a comprehensive update of Woodstock's personnel policies in 2024. The contract remains at-will with no fixed term.

G. Potential Vote – Village Conservancy Agreement

Chair Ray Bourgeois noted that a proposed executive session for the Village Conservancy Agreement was no longer needed, and the Boards proceeded directly to a vote.

Eric Duffy expressed appreciation for the patience of the Village Conservancy, acknowledging it had been a long process and that the organization had been eager to proceed. Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn expressed gratitude to the citizens who had stepped

forward to undertake this work on behalf of the Town and Village, and noted that the Conservancy would be raising its own funds, thereby saving taxpayer dollars.

Motion: by Chair Seton Mcilroy to adopt the Village Conservancy Agreement as currently written. (5:40PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to adopt the Village Conservancy Agreement as currently written. (5:40PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Roger Logan a member of the Village Conservancy Committee, briefly thanked the Boards and expressed the committee's eagerness to begin its work.

F. Adjournment

Motion: by Laura Powell to adjourn the Meeting (5:41PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Chair Seton Mcilroy to adjourn the Meeting (5:41PM)

Seconded: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar