

Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
January 21st, 2025
6:00PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Agenda

- A.** Call to order
- B.** Additions to & deletions from posted agenda
- C.** Citizen Comments
- D.** Manager's Report
- E.** Discussion
 - On Farm Restaurant
 - Town Meeting Prep
 - Update on Purchase of the Woodstock Aqueduct Company
 - EDC Housing group - Housing presentation
 - Water ordinance
- F.** Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313
- G.** Approval of Minutes

11.14.24	12.30.24
11.19.24	01.07.25
11.21.24	01.13.25
12.05.24	01.16.25
12.17.25	

- H.** Adjournment

This Meeting will be held in person at Town Hall and on Zoom

The link to join us is

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84782406503?pwd=UXAzWnJxaEE0MzJaMlBKeHJPUjB6QT09>

or from zoom.us you can enter these details to join the meeting

Meeting ID: 847-8240-6503

Password: 247624

You can also download the Zoom app on your smartphone

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

TO AMEND SECTION 536: ON-FARM RESTAURANTS WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION

31 The Green
Woodstock, VT 05091

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4441, the Planning Commission has prepared this written report to accompany the proposed amendment to Section 536 of the Town Zoning Regulations.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The primary intent of the proposed amendment to Section 536 is to clarify the mechanism for measuring whether a proposed on-farm restaurant meets the size and scale requirements in a more practical manner by removing the specific reference to 2,800 square feet (“SF”). A minor change is also proposed to move 536 3e from the ‘Size and Scale’ section to the ‘Hours’ section.

FINDINGS:

In 2022 the Selectboard adopted an “on farm restaurant” regulation after months of deliberation and constituent input. This amendment would expand beyond the foundations of Act 143 and allow for the development of on-farm restaurants in the Residential Five Acre District. As is common with new legislation, provisions of the amendment lost their clarity and resulted in confusion throughout the judicial process. Believing that the judicial interpretation of the language does not match their intent, the Selectboard tasked the Commission with reviewing and recommending changes that would create clarity for measuring whether a proposed on-farm restaurant meets the size and scale requirements.

After listening to residents, holding discussions on the topic, and researching farm structures in our town, the Commission concluded that removing the specific 2,800 SF limit allows for a more practical review of on-farm restaurants. The Commission determined that several factors contributed to the conclusion that a size restriction based on certain square footage was arbitrary, ineffective in measuring the impact to an area, and unduly restrictive of future on farm restaurants.

First, the commission looked at existing farm structures in Woodstock and found that there are many cases where there are very large existing farm structures, which are multiple times the size of a 2800 SF footprint building, yet fit the rural character of our R5 district. Historic development patterns have led to these very large farm structures being built over time with additions to accommodate increasing needs and multiple uses. These often very visible and prominent farm structures give a historical grand scale to the built agricultural landscape and we find that having a footprint restriction would limit the reuse of these existing structures.

Secondly, there are also many instances where very large structures have no or limited visual impact to the character of the area because they are screened or outside of view. We feel that a size limit would be unnecessary and burdensome in these circumstances where projects would

exist outside of sightlines of the surrounding area. The R5 district, with a minimum 5 acres for on-farm restaurants, can be large of scale with diverse contextual settings where buildings can be found above 2800 SF footprints without undue adverse effects on the character of the area.

Thirdly, the Commission feels that the other existing controls in the regulations of On Farm Restaurants are much more significant and effective in limiting the impact to an area. These include items such as the restrictions on hours of operation, days per week, outdoor capacities, last seating times, frequency of outdoor events, and occupancy limits.

Lastly, we were not able to authenticate the original reasoning behind the establishment of a specific square footage. Through our previous findings, discussions, and public comment, any specific size limit, much less 2800 square feet, could not be justified in any meaningful light and we find TZR §536(B)(3)(b) to be baseless.

This proposed amendment ensures the evaluation of a future project's impact focuses on the conditional use and site plan criteria by eliminating a one-size-fits-all approach based on an arbitrary size limit.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed amendment focuses on removing the specific reference to 2,800 SF to provide a more practical mechanism for assessing whether a proposed on-farm restaurant meets size and scale requirements. This change aims to facilitate a more nuanced and fair evaluation process, support the viability and economic sustainability of agricultural operations, and minimize adverse impacts on the community and future applicants by avoiding arbitrary size constraints.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin Pauly

Benjamin Pauly,
Chair, Planning Commission

Matthew Driscoll

Matt Driscoll,
Clerk Planning Commission

Signature: Benjamin Pauly
Benjamin Pauly (Oct 15, 2024 10:26 EDT)

Email: benjaminpauly@gmail.com

Signature: 
Matthew Driscoll (Oct 16, 2024 09:04 EDT)

Email: matthew.m.driscoll@gmail.com

BYLAW AMENDMENT
AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 536: ON-FARM RESTAURANTS
PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING DRAFT
November 6, 2024

SECTION 536. ON-FARM RESTAURANTS

A. Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of this section is to specify provisions that support the responsible expansion of on-farm restaurants into the R5 District. The Town recognizes the important role that agriculture plays in the economic vitality of Woodstock's future. The Town also understands that such a demand can place an undue burden on the Town's rural landscapes without proper oversight and regulation.

B. Requirements. Any restaurant located in the R-5 District must comply with the following requirements:

1. Before receiving a conditional use permit to operate an on-farm restaurant, an applicant must submit a certificate of farm determination from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to the Administrative Officer.
2. Hours.
 - a. Hours of operation shall not exceed 11:30a.m. to 10:00p.m., five (5) days per week.
 - b. No customers shall be seated outside after 8pm or inside after 9:30pm.
3. Size and Scale.
 - a. The minimum lot area required is ten (10) acres except that the minimum lot area shall be five (5) acres for the adaptive reuse of farm structures existing as of July 1, 2022.
 - b. ~~The footprint of the restaurant building shall not exceed 2,800 square feet.~~
 - b. The footprint of the outdoor dining area shall not exceed 25% of the total footprint of

the restaurant building.

- c. Occupancy shall be limited to the maximum occupancy load, as determined by the Woodstock Fire Chief, or 100 persons, whichever is less.
- d. The occupancy limit for daily outdoor dining shall not exceed 25% of the amount as determined by § 536(B)(3)(c).

~~e. No customers shall be seated outside after 8pm or inside after 9:30pm.~~

- 4. Menu. The daily menu must feature products produced on site, as determined by the TDRB. The applicant shall provide a sample menu to the TDRB that identifies the products either produced or not produced on the farm, at least forty-eight (48) hours before the noticed hearing.
- 5. Parking. Shall conform with the requirements of § 522(E), unless otherwise determined by the TDRB.
- 6. On-site retail sales are prohibited.
- 7. Special Event Standards. Events include product demonstrations, tastings, classes, and celebratory functions, (e.g., weddings).
 - a. All special event parking shall be located at least 500' from the nearest residence.
 - b. Outdoor special events shall be limited to no more than three (3) events per year.
 - c. All outdoor evening events shall cease by 10:00pm on weekends (Friday – Sunday) and 9:00pm on weekdays (Monday – Thursday). No event may start before 8:00am.
 - d. Noise shall not exceed 60 decibels (dB), as measured at the property line.
 - e. There shall be no firework displays.
 - f. Attendance shall be limited to the maximum allowed occupancy load, as determined by Woodstock Fire Chief, or 150 persons, whichever is less.

C. Definitions.

As used in this section:

“Farm” shall have the same meaning as in Section 2.14 of the Vermont R.A.P.

“Farm structure” shall have the same meaning as in Section 2.15 of the Vermont R.A.P.

* * *

SECTION 810. CONDITIONAL USE APPROVAL

Any use or structure, which requires conditional use approval, shall not be granted a zoning permit by the Administrative Officer unless the TDRB determines that the proposed use or structure conforms to the general standards prescribed in these Regulations and does not cause an undue adverse effect on the following:

1. The capacity of existing or planned community facilities;
2. The character of the area affected, as defined by the purpose or purposes of the zoning district within which the project is located, and specifically stated policies and standards of the Woodstock Town Plan;
3. Traffic on roads and highways in the vicinity;
4. Bylaws then in effect;
5. Utilization of renewable energy resources.

Study of Building Sizes in Woodstock

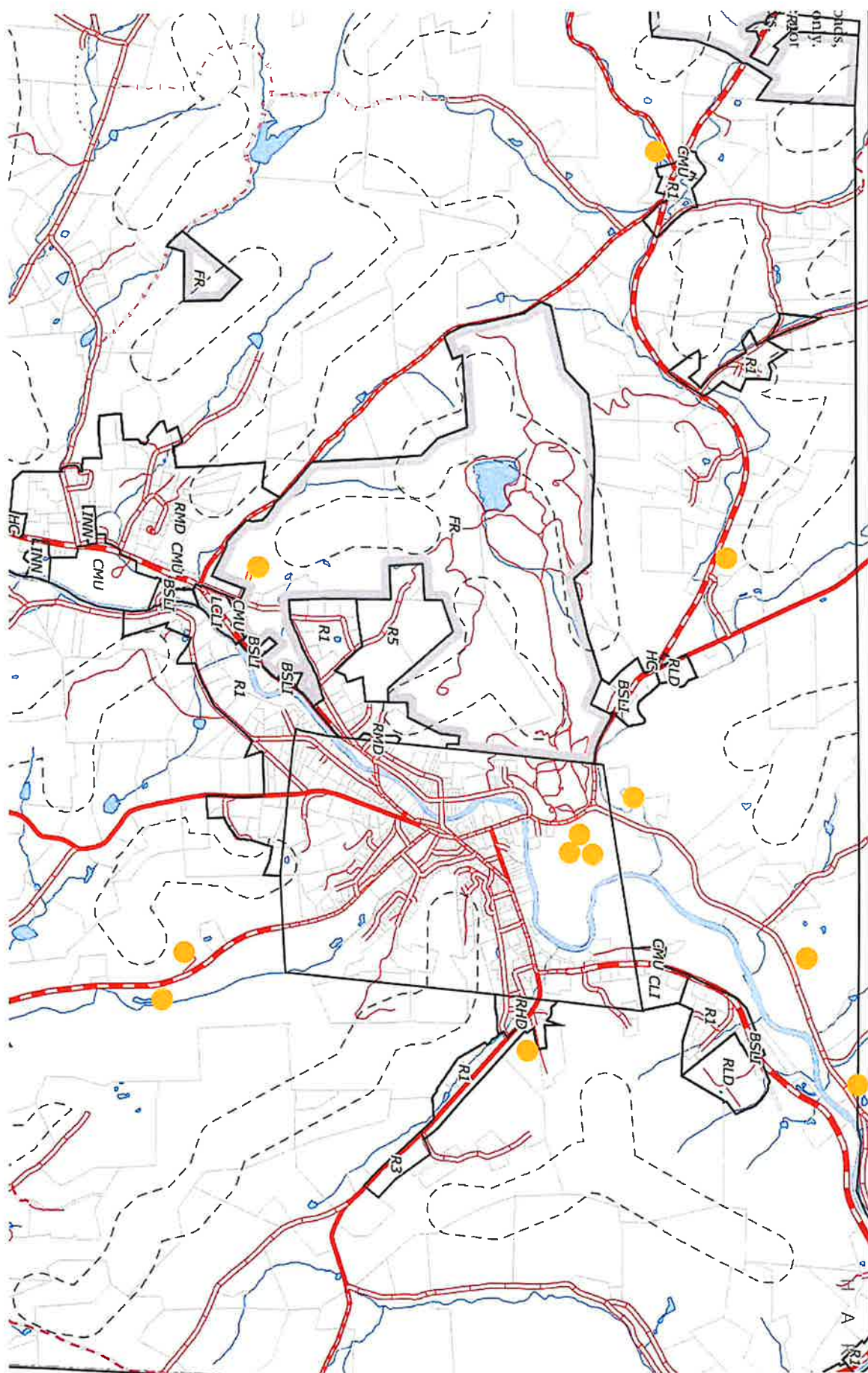
12 Sample buildings in R5 district or agricultural settings

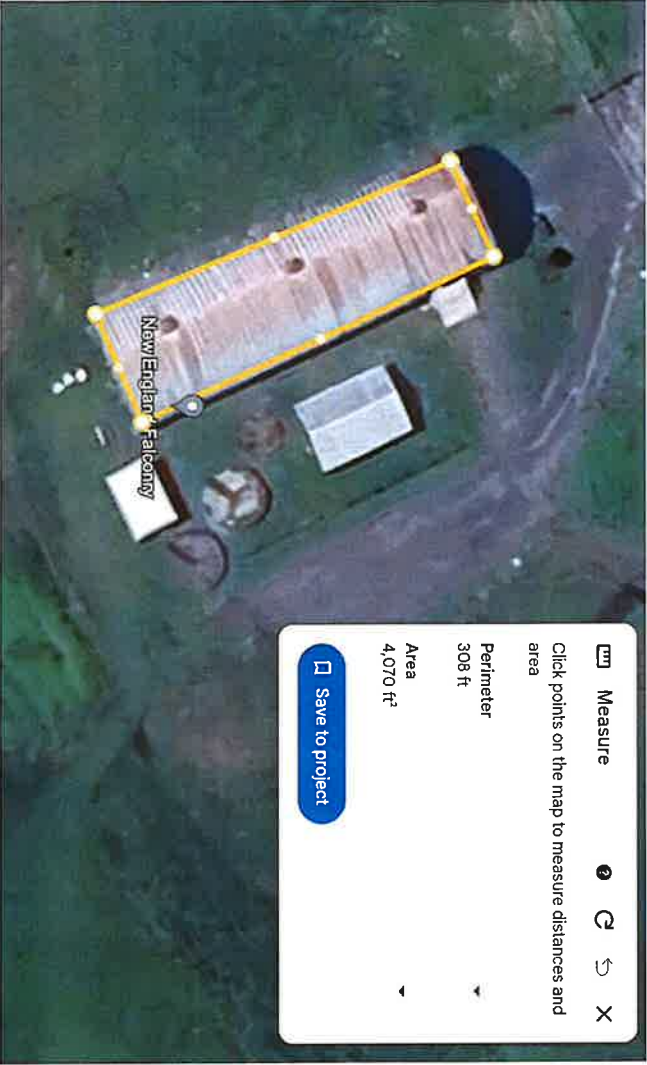
Findings:

- Historic pattern of growth leads to buildings being built up and added to over time. This often leads to footprints significantly larger than 2800 square feet with multiple uses.
- Despite the large scale of buildings in the R5 district, they did not seem out of scale in these rural and agricultural settings.
- Numerous other non-agricultural structures exist in the R5 district, such as private homes, that are over 2800 square feet.
- There are many cases where large buildings are not visible to the public or neighbors and therefore their large size does cause any impact to the character of the area.

Conclusion:

Any size limitation, much less 2800 square feet, is not an effective measurement on the impact to the rural character, is unnecessary in non-visible locations, and unduly restricts adaptive reuse of large existing agricultural structures.





Field measured footprint 4,356 Square Feet
Hartland Hill
R5



Old River Road
R5



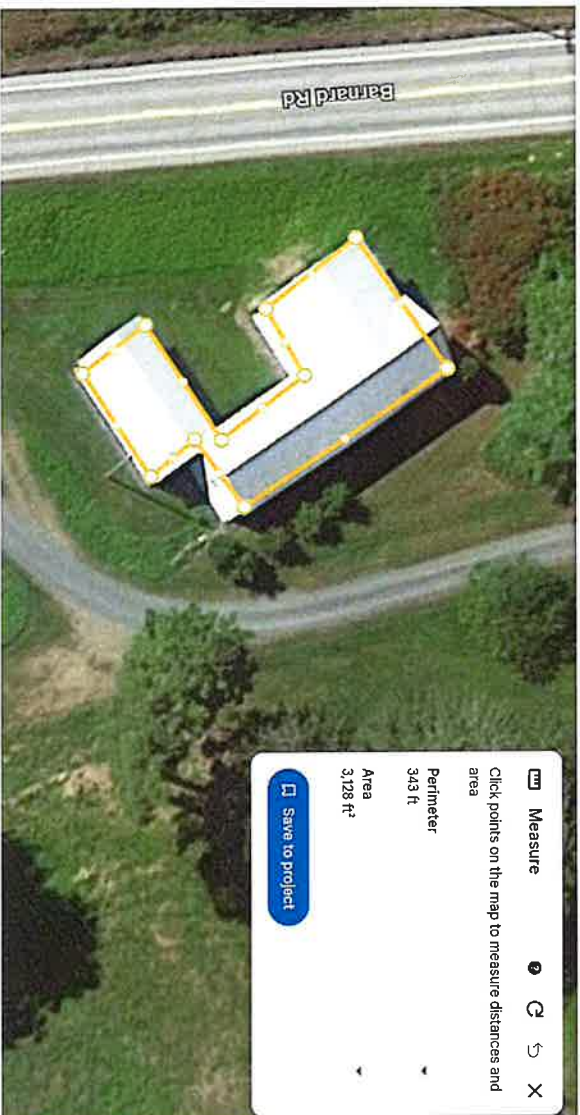


Field measured footprint: 2,777 Square Feet
Kelly Way



Field measured footprint: 3,156 Square Feet
Route 106
R5

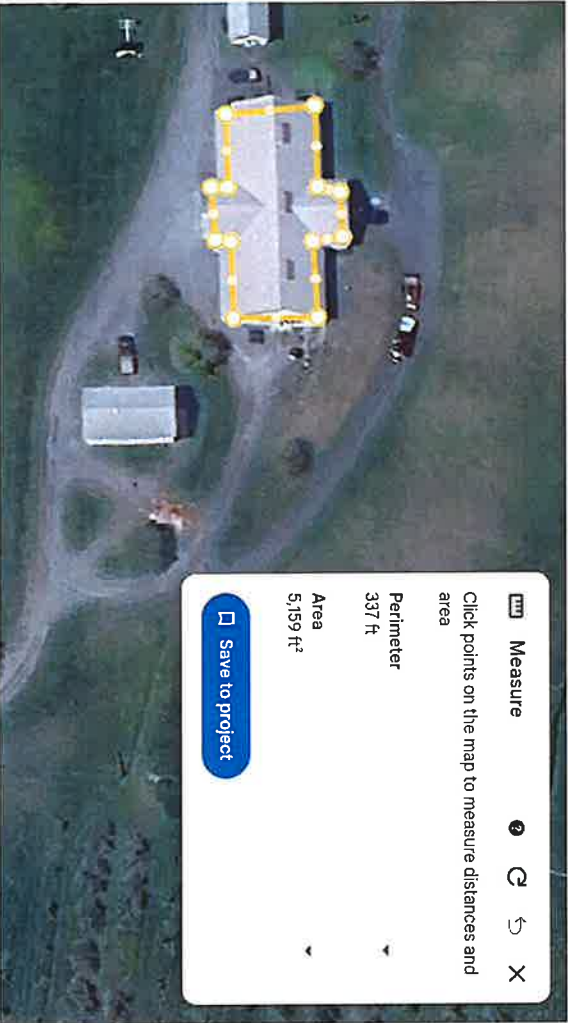




Route 12
R5



North Bridgewater Road
R5



Maplewood Farm
River Road
R5

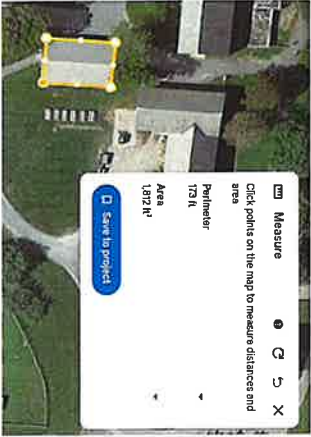


River Road
R5

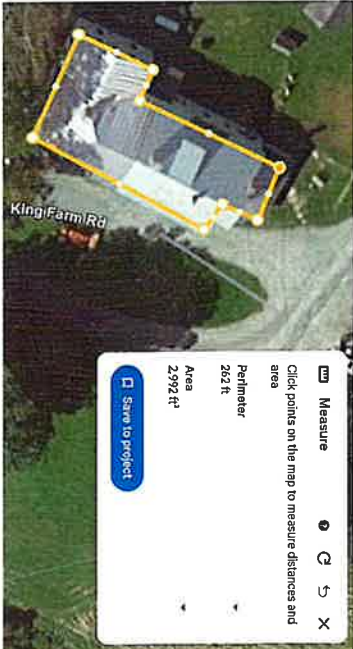




Billings Farm Village R3



King Farm Forestry



To: Selectboard Members

From: Jon Spector

Date: January 16, 2025

RE: Short-Term EDC Considerations

As you know, the EDC has suspended grant-making while the Selectboard finishes its work to define the long-term objectives for Woodstock, the short-term goals to move towards these objectives, and the guidance you wish to provide to all the Boards and Commissions.

You did not request that we provide input into your process, but we felt it might be useful to do so, understanding that as always our role is advisory. In particular, there are two ongoing programs – marketing and housing – where funding will run out in the next 6 weeks, and where there are consequences if this funding is not renewed. We want to make you aware of these consequences while still abiding by your request that we halt any new grant funding proposals.

As context, the Economic Development Reserve Fund received about \$400,000 in calendar 2024. Annual contributions to the Fund from the Options Tax on Meals, Rooms and Alcohol have been growing on average by about 5.5% annually, to give you a sense of what the future contributions to the Fund might be.

Currently about \$125,000 is “unencumbered”, meaning it has not been promised to a project approved by both the EDC and the Selectboard.

Marketing Program

After several years of reconfiguration and reallocation of funds (including significant reductions in the annual cost) we believe we’ve found a sustainable balance of funding, staffing and marketing approaches to market Woodstock effectively. The platforms, marketing channels and personnel can be used to target both visitors to Woodstock and new businesses, although in the past and currently by far the largest focus is on attracting visitors.

The marketing working group is very satisfied with the current arrangements with Jess Kirby and her team. We believe funding should be continued for another year at the current annual cost of roughly \$55,000. If the Selectboard is seeking shorter-term commitments we can explore a shorter contract, though we recommend this not be done on a regular basis.

(Separate from the above, we are getting ready to review six responses to the RFP to enhance the marketing website. The cost of these proposals range from \$20,000 to \$40,000. Since you indicated in a prior meeting that you wanted us to move forward with the RFP process, we will present these options and our recommendation to you next month.)

Housing Advisor

The program to fund the Housing Advisor expires at the end of February. Our recommendation is to continue funding the Housing Advisor position, legal and advertising expenses at an annual cost of \$52,000. But we also recommend significantly shifting the focus of this role to prepare for a larger, sustained, long-term effort to increase housing supply and development in Woodstock. And to indicate our strong support for investing in housing as a means of economic development we suggest encumbering additional funds to be dedicated to success-based housing programs going forward.

We suggest the following changes to the role of Housing Advisor and the Housing program in general, as follows:

- ¶ About 10% of the time of the Housing Advisor needs to be spent on administering the completion of the 14 housing units already receiving incentive funding from the EDC. A portion of our incentives are paid upon completion of the work or part way through the rental term and the Advisor must oversee these projects to confirm program guidelines are adhered to. Failing to fund this effort may risk the loss of units in progress or about to start.
- ¶ We feel it makes sense to continue to promote and administer the four existing housing incentive programs until they are supplanted by new programs. They are all “success-based” programs, meaning we only pay when housing units are created. While demand for these programs has slowed significantly in 2024, we’ve been surprised by a recent pickup in interest in the ‘Lease to Locals program’ where we now have 4 potential units.

However, given the investment we’ve made to develop these programs we believe we can administer them with a much lower time commitment going forward. We can also significantly lower the ongoing cost by bringing the ‘Lease to Locals’ program in-house, eliminating any out-of-pocket expenses.

- ¶ The majority of the Housing Advisor’s role should be spent on setting the Town up for future success in real estate development in two areas: streamlining the development process and making development financially attractive. The attached presentation describes these two important roles in greater detail.

Adopting the recommendations above will not require any additional funding. There is currently \$200,000 remaining in the funds allocated to housing incentive programs. We recommend using \$52,000 of this to pay for the Housing Advisor role as described above, keeping the remaining \$148,000 allocated for future housing incentives.

Finally, we suggest the Selectboard encumber an additional \$200,000 to be dedicated to “success-based” housing initiatives for a period of one year. If these funds are not utilized after one year they may return to the “unencumbered” category for redeployment to other priorities.

I’m happy to answer any questions you have about this input to your priority-setting process, as you consider how best to implement the long-term objectives and short-term goals for Woodstock.



WOODSTOCK EDC
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Housing Working Group

**Presentation to Selectboard
January 21, 2025**



Funds from the Economic Development Reserve Fund supported the current housing initiatives for 2^{1/2} years with some success

- We've delivered on the objective to increase the number of homes for local workers
- We've learned lessons along the way about what works and what doesn't
- Today, we are presenting a plan for Woodstock to work on housing and make a bigger impact



WOODSTOCK EDC
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The four housing programs have worked



- ❑ **14** housing units secured
 - **3** bedrooms
 - **1** studio
 - **6** one bedroom apartment
 - **1** two bedroom house
 - **3** three bedroom house
- ❑ Average Grant: **\$10,782**
- ❑ Average Rent per Unit: **\$1,281**
- ❑ Total Grants: **\$244,002**



- ❑ **12** local families/individuals housed
 - **2** ADUs are still in process
- ❑ **12** local workers housed
 - **3** Hospitality workers
 - **3** Business owners
 - **2** Teachers/daycare
 - **2** Business manager/legal
 - **1** Healthcare
 - **1** Public Works employee
- ❑ **3** children in/will be in school system

The programs depend on our Housing Advisor, volunteers and paid experts

Current Housing Programs

1. ADU Workforce Rental
2. Multi Unit Housing Rental
3. Lease to Locals (formerly Rental Incentive)
4. HomeShare

Housing Advisor

Trena Tolliver

- 50 hours per month
 - Program Management
 - Program Design
 - Program Enhancement
 - Landlord/Tenant Support

See support page for more details

Housing Group Volunteers

- Jill Davies
- Lynda Fulkerson
- Ben Jervey
- Cliff Johnson
- Lisa Lawlor
- Sally Miller
- Greg Olmstead
- Deborah Greene
- Ellen Phillips Soroka

Professional Support

- Placemate
- Lawyer
- Graphic designer



WOODSTOCK EDC
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The lessons learned will help our future efforts

- Building costs are far more expensive than anyone imagined 5 years ago!
- Developing new housing units is unprofitable
 - The “cost gap” appears to be in the order of \$50,000 per unit
- Lack of water access has impeded progress
- Red tape makes things difficult for even the most enthusiastic
- Our incentives are most valuable when supported by State incentives, but there is now a waitlist
- Increased taxes dilute the benefits of incentives
- Short term rental owners are not responsive to incentives offered
- Empty unit owners are responsive to incentives offered



We can make a bigger impact all working together on two priority goals with your leadership

Priority Goal

Streamline the Development Process

- Selectboard
- EDC
- Planning & Zoning Commission & Office
- Regional Energy Coordinator
- State Legislature
- Listers
- Other Town & Village Boards and Commissions
- More volunteers....realtors, developers, enthusiasts

Priority Goal

Make Development Financially Attractive



WOODSTOCK EDC
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Streamlining the development process will save time and result in more available incentives

Priority Goal

Streamline the Development Process

- Create water access in Village & East End
 - Fund the state mandated improvements
 - Prioritize & fund any further improvements needed to bring water to the East End
- Update zoning bylaws and Town & Village Plan
 - Apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to pay for the work
 - Make short & longer term amendments to Village & Town Bylaws
 - Streamline permitting process
- Create state designated Neighborhood Development Area
- Decrease information barriers
 - E.g., Create a developer housing step by step guide to process and \$ resources



Making development financially attractive means closing the “cost gap”

Priority Goal

Make Development Financially Attractive

- Create new and enhanced Economic Reserve Fund grants
- Explore TIF (Tax Increment Financing) and other tax credits
- Explore other State and Federal programs
- Seek short term property tax exemptions for new projects e.g. EDC or VHIP supported
 - Overall long term gain to property tax with short term relief for development
- Explore and change negative incentives e.g. Current Use withdrawal penalty, permit costs
- Create revenue from new taxes e.g. vacancy tax, non homestead taxes



We need to make decisions very soon about the current programs and the Housing Advisor contract

- The Housing Advisor contract ends **Feb 28**
- We have obligations that continue past this date for those already in a program
 - E.g., Compliance, completing projects, unexpected events
- We'd like to renew the Housing Advisor's contract to:
 - Continue working on existing agreements
 - Continue working on existing programs
 - Bring Lease to Locals in house
 - Work on 4 Lease to Locals agreements in progress
 - 3 new ADU inquiries
- Manage and contribute to the two priority goals



Implementing this approach will not require encumbering any additional funds for housing in 2025

Housing funds encumbered but not committed: \$200,000

Current Year Commitments (March 2024 - February 2025)

Housing Advisor, Legal and Advertising:	\$51,000
Placemate 12 month contract:	\$32,000
Program Incentives:	\$60,000
Total:	\$143,000

Proposed Budget (March 2025 - February 2026)

Housing Advisor, Legal and Advertising:	\$52,000
Program Incentives Allowed:	\$148,000
Total:	\$200,000



The Housing Advisor has an important role

Program Management

- Works with applicants from their initial inquiry through application & approval, completed agreements to compliance
 - Records legal agreements with the Town Clerk
 - Tracks and perform compliance checks
 - Makes incentive payments, maintains financials
- Consults legal counsel and State of Vermont resources as needed
- Manages applications through defined approval process
- Updates webpages with housing news, regulations, maintain web pages
- Promotes programs - advertising, educational meetings, other interested towns
- Manages EDC Housing Working Group and Housing Collaboration Team; meets monthly

Program Design & Enhancement

- Designs program details & processes
- Works with legal counsel to draft & refine legal agreements
- Works with government to encourage changes to reduce developer costs
 - *Planning Commission* on bylaw reforms
 - *State/Lists* on Covenant Deed Restriction assessment exemption for those in the VHLP Program
 - *Selectboard* on tax exemption to provide modest tax relief to residents who construct new homes/ADUs
 - *State Representative* on proposed initiatives to enhance opportunities for tax relief

Landlord/Tenant Support

- Provides assistance to property owners creating an ADU or wanting to lease their property
- Works with applicants to support them becoming a landlord e.g., creating a lease, finding a qualified tenant, landlord training
- Supports landlords looking to rent to locals
- Supports employers & tenants searching for housing.. Tenant matching



WOODSTOCK EDC
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
November 14th, 2024
5:30 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: Tom Weschler, Byron Kelly, Susie Stulz, Barbara Kennedy, Molly Hutchins, Jon Spector, Debra Neuhooff, Peter Shoemaker, Charlie Kimbell, Alex Mulley, Chris Miller, Ben Pauly, Jill Mitchell, Roger Logan, Steven Bauer

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of November 14th to order at 5:30PM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda- none

C. Citizen Comments – none

D. Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313

Motion: by Susan Ford to enter Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313 at (5:32PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed Returned (5:37PM)

E. Discussion

Water System Capital Project and purchase of Vondell Reservoir (5:38pm)

Susan Ford explained the meeting format, one person from the audience or one on Zoom to speak at a time.

Tom Weschler questioned the necessity of the Vondell Reservoir for the current and future water system.

Susan Ford explained the historical context and future potential of the Vondell Reservoir.

Eric Duffy clarified that the purchase of the water company is still pending. The purchase has not closed yet.

Tom Weschler questioned the necessity of purchasing Vondell and if easements to the water rights already exist.

Eric Duffy and Laura Powell explained the broader benefits of Vondell, including future water use, recreation, and conservation.

Susan Ford emphasized the risk of losing Vondell to private ownership if not purchased by the town.

Barbara Kennedy inquired about taxability and revenue from Vondell.

Eric Duffy provided the annual revenue from Vondell and mentioned the cost of water readings.

Byron Kelly supported the 1B vote, then questioned the allocation of costs between users and taxpayers

Byron Kelly expressed concerns about the \$1.6 million cost for 350 acres and its future potential.

Susie Stulz highlighted the historical and ecological significance of Vondell, including its potential for fighting wildfires.

Susan Ford confirmed that Vondell could be used for emergency water in case of drought or wildfires.

Susan Ford acknowledged the potential for development but emphasized the current focus on preservation.

Eric Duffy revealed the appraised value of Vondell at \$2,058,000 million, indicating a significant discount at \$1.6 million purchase price

Laura Powell discussed the potential for future revenue from Vondell and the need for a rate increase.

Molly Hutchins emphasized the importance of connecting Vondell to the water system for emergency use.

Alex Mulley questioned the allocation of local options and hospitality taxes for the bond.

Laura Powell explained the tentative allocation and the need for user contributions to cover the debt.

Jon Spector suggested preserving flexibility in funding allocations to accommodate future priorities.

Debra Neuhoff, questioned the 40% contribution from non-users and suggested a flat per property fee.

Laura Powell explained the rationale behind the current allocation, emphasizing the benefits to all taxpayers.

Peter Shoemaker argued that users should pay more through rate increases rather than property taxes.

Eric Duffy and Susan Ford acknowledged the need to explore different rate structures and revenue projections.

Charlie Kimbell highlighted the potential for increased capacity and grand list growth with Vondell.

Laura Powell confirmed that the bond for Vondell and 1B will be paid by all users and taxpayers, while the Elm Street suspension and new well will be user funded.

Chris Miller questioned the feasibility of connecting Vondell to the water system and the cost

Ben Pauly stressed the importance of a timeline for new hookups to support future development.

Laura Powell and Susan Ford acknowledged the need for better communication and messaging to non-users.

Eric Duffy provided estimates for the cost of Vondell and emphasized the need for further discussions and budget projections.

Participants are encouraged to attend upcoming meetings for further discussion.

F. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (6:58PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar

**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 to have them to do repairs to the road if they caused issues during mud season.

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.

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

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
November 21st, 2024
9:30AM
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

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of November 21st to order at 9:30AM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda -none

C. Citizen Comments – none

D. Discussion

Discussion and vote on the allocation of Vondell and capital project funds

Eric Duffy provided an update on the status of the allocation plans & mentioned a bond vote scheduled for December 10th

The original idea was to have the Elm Street pipe and the new well being paid for by only users, and splitting costs for 1B and Vondell between all taxpayers based on house appraisal.

At the last meeting a Selectboard member made a presentation which summarized having all four of the capital projects being a paid for by users, Vondell would be paid by all taxpayers, hydrant fees would be increased to \$270 a quarter to help offset some of that cost.

The board was given time to consider and possibly propose their own alternatives.

Susan Ford discussed the challenges of using hydrant fees and the potential need for adjustments based on interest rates and grants.

Susan Ford's proposed payment from the bond be a percentage: 23% all taxpayers, 27% local option tax payment, and a 49.6% water user.

Eric Duffy clarified Susan Ford's proposal, noting that the local option tax payment would remain constant while user and taxpayer payments would adjust annually.

Greg Fullerton asked for a breakdown of the percentage split between non-users and users.

Susan Ford explained that 23% would be paid by all taxpayers, including users, and 49.6% users via the water rate, which has not been decided.

Susan Ford clarified that all the capital projects would be paid through these percentages and the Vondell would be paid by all taxpayers.

The board discussed the implications of this proposal, including potential dissatisfaction among users and non-users.

A board member suggested decreasing the economic development fund contribution to the Vondell project.

Susan Ford argued that Vondell is not immediate economic development and should not use EDC funds.

Ray Bourgeois preferred keeping the entire 1% tax for all infrastructure projects.

Eric Duffy summarizes the board is leaning toward Susan Ford's proposal: Vondell will be paid by all taxpayers based on house appraisal. Elm Street Bridge, 1B, New well- 23% for all taxpayers, 27% for local option tax, and 49.6% for water users in the first year. With the allocation decreasing every year as the interest rate decreased.

Susan Ford emphasized the importance of keeping options open for future adjustments based on interest rates and grants.

Eric Duffy opens the floor for public comment, with Roger Logan expressing satisfaction with the compromise.

Motion: by Keri Cole to approve the allocation of Vondell will be paid by all taxpayers based on house appraisal. Elm Street Bridge, 1B, New well- 23% for all taxpayers, 27% for local option tax, and 49.6% for water users (9:47AM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (8:49AM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar

**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

**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. ARPA Resolution

1. Curative Validation Resolution

C. Citizen Comments – no

D. Manager's Report

Eric Duffy thanked the Public Works crew for their efforts during the recent weather conditions and welcomed 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

Permitting 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 Compliant (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 to allocate \$20,000 for permitting software and website updates from the ARPA funds.

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 FY26.

Motion: by Susan Ford to continue with our contribution to the shared Energy Coordinator 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 were 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 project team will prepare an amendment to the contract and conduct a pilot study if desired

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

State House Delegation (7:08PM)

Senator Rebecca White introduced herself and outlined her background and re-election.

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

Senator Joe Major, the newest member, introduced himself and mentioned 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.

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

Senator 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.

Senator 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.

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 budget need finalization by early January 2025. Closing for Woodstock Water system will be March or April 2025. Budget needs to be finalized and then voted on in late January 2025.

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 board discussed 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 conversation concluded 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 confirmed January 30th as the meeting date, with a 4 PM start time, and emphasized 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 discussed 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 for 11.14.24, 11.19.24, 11.21.24 , 12.05.24

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

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
December 30th, 2024
4:00 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, Fire Chief David Green

Public: Tom Debevoise III

A. Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of December 30th to order at 4:00PM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda

Amendment – Wastewater Plant

C. Citizen Comments – no

D. Discussion

Amendment – Wastewater Plant

Eric Duffy explained the amendment includes an additional \$36,800 for the project, with specific milestones for plan completion.

Motion: by Laura Powell to accept the amendment to the Hoyle Tanner Engineering Proposal (4:03PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 4-0-0

Motion: by Susan Ford to authorize Chair Ray Bourgeois to sign the amendment (4:03PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 4-0-0

FY26 Budget Discussion

Eric Duffy outlined the two main changes in the budget: \$120,000 for the water system project and a \$2,000 increase for the Rec Center budget from the previous year.

With those two additions the projected tax rate increase is 11.22%

With town clerk fees being set by the state and zoning permits already increased.

Susan Ford expressed hope for a lower Vondell Reservoir bond with a meeting with the Land Trust upcoming, and Eric Duffy mentioned efforts to secure a zero-interest loan for Elm Street Bridge project.

Ray Bourgeois suggested increasing rent for Pentangle and the Chamber of Commerce rent by 10%, citing rising costs of heat and electricity.

Eric Duffy confirmed that the Pentangle contract includes annual increases based on New England CPI, which have not been applied since 2017.

Laura Powell and Susan Ford discussed the potential increase in Chamber of Commerce rent, noting the lack of a formal lease.

Ray Bourgeois proposed increasing fire alarm registration fees by \$25 and Susan Ford highlighted the need for better collection enforcement.

Ray Bourgeois suggested reducing the clerk's assistant budget by \$13,000, noting a decrease in recording fees.

Laura Powell advocated for adding a Planning and Zoning Director to support housing and development, despite the tax rate increase.

Eric Duffy discussed the potential for funding a Planning and Zoning Director through shared costs with the village and other departments. The board considered the possibility of partially funding the position mid-year and the potential for a larger conversation on departmental budgets.

The board discussed the Town Constable position and if it is necessary.

Ray Bourgeois asked about the Rec Center and if their rates have been increased.

Susan Ford questioned the \$14,000 budgeted for fireworks, suggesting it could be funded by the Chamber of Commerce.

Eric Duffy agreed to explore alternative funding sources and mentions the need for a decision soon to avoid contract issues.

Susan Ford raised concerns about the audit expense and suggests examining other auditors to improve timeliness and efficiency.

Ray Bourgeois proposed increasing employee contributions to 9% for health insurance, citing rising insurance costs.

The board discussed the benefits for the town treasurer. Eric Duffy explained the need for benefits due to the stipend nature of the treasurer's role and the payroll process.

Nonprofit Funding and Special Articles

Ray Bourgeois suggested informing nonprofits that they cannot rely on town funding for the next budget cycle.

Susan Ford expressed concern about public response to funding and suggests letting organizations know of the board's intentions for the next year.

The board discussed the potential for reducing the culture and recreation line item in the budget.

Water and Sewer

Eric Duffy provided an overview of the water and sewer budgets, noting increases in salaries, operating supplies, and utilities.

Eric Duffy mentioned the upcoming closure of the Aqueduct Company and the need for a budget for the final three months of ownership.

The board agreed to meet again to finalize the contract and discuss further budget adjustments.

The board plans another meeting for Tuesday January 7th at 4PM

Tom Debevoise discussed the potential for conservation restrictions on the Vondell property and the benefits for fundraising.

David Green emphasized the importance of securing conservation restrictions to maximize private donations and grants.

Susan Ford and Eric Duffy agreed to schedule a meeting with the Vermont Land Trust to discuss the conservation easement and fundraising strategy.

The board discussed the need for a joint meeting with the Village Trustees.

E. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (4:57PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
January 7th, 2025
4:00 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: Jon Spector, Roger Logan

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of January 7th to order at 4:00PM

B. Addition to & deletions from posted agenda

Deletion of Boiler Purchase for DPW

C. Citizen Comments

Jon Spector shared a story about the lack of financial planning for the new school built in 1958, emphasizing the importance of saving over time.

Jon Spector suggested adding half a percent to the annual budget for capital investment to avoid future financial burdens.

D. Discussion

FY26 budget Discussion

Eric Duffy confirmed that a version of the budget is available online.

Eric Duffy mentioned that the board hasn't made significant changes to expenses besides increasing rent on Pentangle and the Chamber of Commerce.

The board discussed the potential reduction in the assistant town clerk's budget due to decreased recording fees.

Ray Bourgeois suggested raising the copay for employee health insurance premium from 7% to 9% for insurance.

Susan Ford expressed concern about taking something away from current employees.

Eric Duffy explained that the insurance change would cost employees about \$500 for a family plan.

Laura Powell, other board members and Roger Logan discussed the impact of raising insurance costs on employees

Laura Powell brings up the topic of fireworks funding, suggesting it might be time to stop funding them and let other organizations take over.

Laura Powell suggested the idea of an Economic Development Director.

Eric Duffy confirmed that the town is budgeted for \$14,000 for fireworks, including music and parking costs.

Susan Ford suggested having an agenda item to review the budget and eliminate items that don't meet our budget.

Jon Spector questioned the decrease in permits and fees, and Eric Duffy explained that the local 1% money was taken out of the budget.

Jon Spector asked if any money is being put aside for future capital needs, and Eric Duffy confirms that the Selectboard approved a new fire truck purchase.

Jon Spector suggests creating a reserve fund for future capital needs

Laura Powell mentioned that the fire department and town hall have capital reserve funds, and Eric Duffy confirms the town has about \$2 million in capital reserves.

The board discussed scheduling a meeting to finalize the budget, with Monday and Thursday being potential dates.

The board discussed lowering the tax rate if there is a surplus of the Vermont Endowment Fund, with Susan Ford and other members supporting the decision.

The board set a Meeting on Monday January 13th at 4PM

E. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (4:32PM)

Seconded: by Keri Cole

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,
Kitty Mears Koar

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
January 13th, 2025
4:00 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: Byron Kelly, Donna Foster, Tony Richie, Seth Westbrook, Kent McFarland,
Tom Debevoise III, Charles Degener III, Roger Logan

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of January 13th to order at 4:03PM

B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Deletion of Boiler Purchase for DPW

C. Citizen Comments

Byron Kelly raised a concern about the timely posting of the budget meeting agenda on the Listserv.

Eric Duffy clarified that the listserv is not legally required to be posted but is an additional posting place.

D. Discussion

Discussion on Vondell Property potential for Conservation

Susan Ford thanked voters for deciding to purchase the bond for Vondell Reservoir for \$1.6 million and discussed offsetting the purchase price.

Susan Ford mentioned the possibility of conserving the property with the Vermont Land Trust in exchange for grants and private fundraising.

Susan Ford noted that the Selectboard has not yet voted on whether to conserve the property and whether to exempt any acreage.

Susan Ford and Pete Fellows from Two River Ottauquechee Regional Commission identified two parcels for potential development: a 30-acre parcel at Grassy Lane and a 10-acre parcel near the existing parking lot.

Ray Bourgeois suggested having options available for future development, including selling or developing the property. Greg Fullerton agreed with Ray Bourgeois.

Laura Powell supported the idea of conserving the property and asked about the impact on grant funding if certain parcels are held back for future development.

Donna Foster from the Vermont Land Trust explained that more funding would be available if more land is conserved, but it's hard to provide exact figures.

Keri Cole agreed about holding the two parcels back for now to explore options.

Susan Ford mentioned that the land trust is exempting the water body and the existing infrastructure.

Tony Richie expressed reluctance to jump into the land trust agreement, fearing it could reduce the property's value for future use.

Tony Richie also requested that the town leave room for a dog park and ensure no restrictions that would inhibit that possibility.

Susan Ford explained the challenges in finding parcels that could be exempted due to vernal pools, wetlands, and steep soils.

Seth Westbrook of the Woodstock Area Mountain Bike Association commented about the Act 250 restrictions being taken into consideration for the property.

Kent McFarland, a conservation biologist, warned about the importance of carefully examining the 40 acres to ensure no endangered species or natural communities are affected.

Eric Duffy mentioned a call he had today with the State Water Development Fund for a very low interest rate.

Motion: by Susan Ford to work with Vermont Land Trust to conserve all the property that they designated, and the 30 acre and 10-acre pieces that the Selectboard have designated. (4:21PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Disbandment of the S. Woodstock Wastewater Plant Design Committee

A committee was formed for the design of the South Woodstock Wastewater Plant to improve its appearance. They have not met for a long period of time so the board would like to disband the committee.

Motion: by Laura Powell to Disbandment of the S. Woodstock Wastewater Plant Design Committee (4:25PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

FY26 Budget

Eric Duffy updated the board on the current budget proposal, which includes a 11.22% tax increase.

Charles Degener, the Town Clerk, expressed concerns about reducing the assistant clerk's budget by \$13,000, noting the importance of maintaining service levels.

The board considered various adjustments, including reducing machinery and equipment expenses and delaying restoration of records.

Eric Duffy discussed the potential increase in ambulance fees.

The board considered the importance of increasing compliance with fire alarm registration and the potential for additional revenue.

Byron Kelly showed support for the Town Clerk and Clerk assistants and the Town Constable.

Byron Kelly raised concerns about the state of Vermont's handling of educational funding and the impact on town budgets.

Roger Logan raised concerns regarding the police revenue in the Town and the Village.

The Board scheduled another meeting January 16th at 9:30AM

The board agreed to increase the ambulance budget and restore capital reserves for future ambulance needs.

Eric Duffy mentioned the need to discuss the water budget for the last quarter of the fiscal year and the upcoming special articles for the town meeting.

E. Adjournment

Motion: by Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting at (4:5:10PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
January 16th, 2025
9:30AM
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:

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of January 16th to order at 9:32AM

B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Ethic Liaison

Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313

C. Citizen Comments

D. Discussion

Ethic Liaison

Eric Duffy explained the new state ethics rules requiring every board to have an Ethics Liaison. The Village Trustees voted to have Stephanie Appelfeller as the ethics liaison, and Eric Duffy recommends the Selectboard do the same.

Motion: by Chair Ray Bourgeois to make Stephanie Appelfeller the Ethics Liaison
(9:32AM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Vote on FY26 Budget

Eric Duffy provided an overview of the budget process, noting numerous meetings since early November.

The town budget proposes a 10.75% potential tax increase, with a 7% increase for sewer rates and a substantial increase for water rates.

The water rate increase is due to the need for proper maintenance, repairs, and capital projects.

Motion: by Greg Fullerton to approve the town budget of \$8,352,359.54 (9:35AM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the Sewer budget of \$1,443,076.47
(9:36AM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the Water budget of 735,226.17 (9:37AM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

There will be a meeting later that day to work on the Water budget

Motion: by Susan Ford to go into Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313 to discuss personnel matters(8:37AM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 4-0-0, passed (Returned 8:52AM)

Eric Duffy suggested discussing potential articles for the town warning, including creating a special fund for the new 1% local option tax and a Water System Ordinance

The Selectboard discussed the need for citizen approval to spend undesignated fund balances.

Eric Duffy recommended keeping 15% of the undesignated fund balance for potential year-end deficits, with the rest going into a reserve fund.

Laura Powell raised the topic of revisiting the move from elected listers to a paid assessor position and possibility of moving to Australian ballot voting.

Keri Cole agreed and suggested waiting to avoid adding additional burden to Eric Duffy.

Eric Duffy stated that he will advocate for the Selectboard's decisions and is willing to support any initiatives they deem important.

Eric Duffy confirmed the town report dedication and thanks the participants for their contributions.

E. Adjournment

Motion: by Greg Fullerton to adjourn the meeting at (9:59PM)

Seconded: by Keri Cole

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar