

**Town of Woodstock
Special Selectboard Meeting
November 18th, 2025
6:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

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

Staff: Eric Duffy, Abbie Sherman

Public: Wendy Marrinan, Beverly Humpstone, Byron Kelly, Roger Logan, Norm Frates,
Donna Foster, Karim Houry

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of November 18th to order at 6:00 PM

A. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Wassail Parade to Use the Town Snow Dump

~~**Vermont Land Trust Grant-Vondell-Cobb Conservation Easement**~~

Vondell-Cobb Conservation Easement Fundraising – Move under Discussion

B. Citizens Comments

Byron Kelly from Woodstock expressed appreciation for the boards and Town Manager. He congratulated Cliff Johnson on his focus on affordable housing and noted the challenges of reconciling community interests with changing demographics. He mentioned that only 9% of current residents lived in Woodstock before 1990, with 75% of the population having been there less than 15 years. He also expressed concern about the frequency of executive sessions and requested more transparency.

Beverly Humpstone from South Woodstock, a Design Review Board member for approximately 20 years, explained that she and fellow board members had resigned as a group. She emphasized the importance of having design expertise on boards overseeing Woodstock's aesthetic character, noting that none of the current Development Review Board members have a design background, while the Design Review Board included professionals with relevant expertise.

Wendy Marrinan supported Beverly Humpstone's comments and requested that the Selectboard ask the Planning Commission to make current planning documents more accessible on the Town website. She noted that draft documents are difficult to find, which hinders public engagement.

C. Manager's Report

Eric Duffy reported attending a meeting with the education committee at the high school, where residents provided feedback to the delegation. He updated the board on

grant applications, noting that Abby Sherman, Stephanie Appelfeller, Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, and the National Park Service are collaborating on a FLAP grant application for up to \$2.2 million to improve access to national parks. The grant would fund sidewalk improvements, Central Bridge repairs, and a trail from National Park to the Rainbow Playschool School. The submission deadline is December 2nd.

Eric Duffy reported that the Town hosted tours of the Wastewater Plant the previous Saturday, with Selectboard representatives, legislators, and members of the public attending. A website with information about the wastewater plant renovation is now live.

Eric Duffy mentioned that he has been posting more frequent updates on his Substack and the Listserv. He noted that Town Hall will be closed for Thanksgiving on Thursday and Friday, while emergency services will remain operational.

The board welcomed Cliff Johnson as a new Selectboard member, who expressed his enthusiasm to serve.

D. Discussion

Plaque Policy/ Rotary Plaque on Town Property

Eric Duffy explained that the Rotary is seeking permission to place a plaque recognizing donors to the star on Mount Tom. The Village Trustees previously asked if the plaque could be placed on the triangle near the Green in front of the Covered Bridge, which would require Selectboard approval. Eric Duffy had consulted with various department heads, who suggested placing it where the current bench is located and possibly relocating the bench. The proposed plaque exceeds the size allowed under Village ordinances.

Susan Ford expressed concern about proceeding without first establishing a policy for plaques on Town property. She suggested developing basic rules regarding size, location, materials, ownership, maintenance responsibilities, and potential relocation. She noted there are over 70 nonprofits in Town and expressed concern about public lands becoming overcrowded with memorials.

There was discussion about who has authority over the Town Green, with Eric Duffy clarifying that while the Town owns the Green, the Trustees manage it according to the Town Plan.

After further discussion, including comments from Roger Logan, who agreed that policies should be established before approving plaques, the board decided not to vote on the Rotary plaque request until a policy is developed. Eric Duffy was directed to draft a policy for consideration at a future meeting.

Wastewater Plant Renovation Updates

Eric Duffy reported that the website for the Wastewater Treatment Plant renovation is now live. He noted that tours were conducted the previous Saturday, and the project is proceeding on schedule for a Town Meeting vote in March.

Wastewater Public Forums

Eric Duffy proposed conducting public forums to provide information about the project, suggesting at least one session per week between now and the March vote. The board expressed support for this approach, and Eric Duffy will coordinate scheduling based on board members' availability.

Vermont Land Trust Grant- Vondell-Cobb Conservation Easement

The board discussed the status of the Vermont Land Trust grant application for the Vondell-Cobb property. Susan Ford explained that they have applied for a grant, and the Vermont Housing Conservation Board has indicated the Town's portion would likely be \$600,000 for conserving the entire property except for the reservoir, water tank area, offices, parking lot, and a 10-acre parcel. The grant would be voted on by January by the Vermont Housing Conservation Board.

Wassail Parade Snow Dump

The board discussed a request from the Wassail Parade Committee to use the Town Snow Dump Road as a staging area for the parade. Norm Frates, representing the committee, explained that after 33 years of staging at the Mill Building Property, the Mill association is no longer allowing use of that space. The committee has developed a plan to use the Snow Dump Road for carriage lineup, with a contingency plan to use the Country Club parking area in case of significant snowfall.

The board discussed the logistics, with Norm Frates confirming they have coordinated with the police department and obtained approval from other property owners along the road. He explained they would stage the carriages at different times and keep the traffic flowing, with additional staff to help manage the process.

Motion: by Susan Ford for the Wassail Parade to use the snow dump (6:46 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement- 61 River Street, Woodstock

Eric Duffy explained that staff had investigated whether there was precedent for approving multi-year abatements but were unable to confirm or deny if the board had previously approved such requests. The board agreed to approve the current abatement while considering adding a statute of limitations to the water and sewer abatement policies in the future.

Motion: by Susan Ford to approve the sewer abatement for 61 River Street (6:49 PM)
Seconded: by Laura Powell
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Future of EDC Grants and Plan for ongoing awarded grants

Eric Duffy presented Abby Sherman's recommendation to end the Economic Development Commission (EDC) grant programs while allowing existing grants to continue through their completion. The board discussed the specifics of how to handle outstanding grants and agreed that no new grants would be approved.

Motion: by Laura Powell to end the EDC grant programs as outlined by Abbie Sherman (7:01 PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Budget Allocation- Water Department

Eric Duffy explained that with the Town now owning the water system, the board needed to decide how to allocate staff salaries across Town, Village, and utility departments. He presented options for splitting costs, noting that currently, office staff time is allocated as 55% Town, 25% Village, and 20% Sewer, while public works is split 50/50 between Town and Sewer.

The board discussed how these allocations would impact water and sewer rates, with Eric Duffy explaining that a 10/10 split between water and sewer would move approximately \$75,000 from sewer to water expenses. Board members recognized that allocations could be adjusted in the future if actual time commitments varied.

Motion: by Laura Powell to set the budget allocation for Town staff time at 55% Town, 25% Village, 10% Water, 10% Sewer, and Public Works Department at 50% Town, 25% Water, 25% Sewer (7:06 PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Vondell-Cobb Conservation Easement Fundraising

Susan Ford explained that to assist with fundraising efforts, the board needed to establish a fundraising target beyond the expected \$600,000 grant from VHCB including everything but the Reservoir, parking lot, the water tank, office area and the 10 acre parcel. Susan Ford noted that Tom Debevoise was willing to lead private fundraising efforts but

needed a specific goal. Board members discussed setting a target of \$1 million, which would allow for potential property improvements beyond the conservation easement.

Motion: by Susan Ford to set the fundraising goal at \$1 million for the Vondell-Cobb Conservation Easement and authorize Tom Debevoise to fundraise on behalf of the Town (7:06 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

FY26 Selectboard Goals and Objectives

Eric Duffy presented a draft of goals and objectives for FY26, explaining the format which included urgency, timeline, and staff time requirements for each goal. He highlighted the Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade as the highest priority, with plans to develop detailed implementation steps for each goal.

Board members discussed the need to be realistic about the number of goals that could be accomplished given staff limitations, with Cliff Johnson asking about the total staff capacity available. Eric Duffy explained that unpredictable daily demands make this difficult to quantify precisely but emphasized that realistically only 3-5 major goals could be accomplished in a year.

Laura Powell suggested further consolidating some goals that seemed redundant or overly detailed. Eric Duffy requested that board members come to the joint meeting with trustees prepared to prioritize 3-5 goals for approval by both boards.

E. Proposed Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313

Motion: by Susan Ford to enter executive session under 1 VSA section 313 to discuss potential contract with the Village Conservancy (7:31 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to exit executive Session (7:46 PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

F. Approval of Minutes

Susan Ford noted she had submitted non-substantive changes to the minutes. The only substantive change was to the October 21st minutes regarding the covered bridge repair, where she wanted to note that the board had attempted to get other bids but hadn't received any, and that the work needed to be done at a specific time.

Motion: by Susan Ford to approve the minutes from 10.21.25, 10.31.25, 11.10.25 with the change (7:47 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

G. Adjournment

Motion: by Laura Powell to adjourn the meeting(7:48 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar