

**Town of Woodstock
Special Selectboard Meeting
December 16th , 2025
6:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

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

Staff: Eric Duffy, Fire Chief David Green, Rodney Kenyon, Abbie Sherman

Public: Ben Pauley, Roger Logan, Al Alessi, Nora Pepe, Aimee Bartlett, Loren Fisher,

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of December 16th to order at 6:00PM.

- A. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda
Proposed Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313**
- B. Citizen's Comments**

Ben Pauley from the Planning Commission expressed appreciation for Laura Powell's role on the Commission as an ex-officio member, noting how valuable it was to have someone conveying the Board's desires and wishes to the Planning Commission. He expressed enthusiasm about working on housing initiatives and the rewrite of bylaws.

Roger Logan thanked the board for their work, particularly appreciating Eric Duffy for keeping the community updated via the listserv. He noted that Susie Stulz wanted to express gratitude to Eric Duffy for helping her prepare taxation information for the Standard and for assistance with FAQs about reassessment.

Al Alessi thanked the Selectboard, Village Trustees, and staff for their communication and maturity, noting it was a refreshing contrast to what is often seen elsewhere. He expressed hope for continued growth in stability and mature communications.

C. Manager's Report

Eric Duffy reported on several items:

- The Wassail events were successful, with thanks extended to the Chamber of Commerce, and participating businesses. The Police Department maintained presence in the Village, and Public Works cleared snow.
- A new Public Works hire started, bringing the department to full staffing. The employee will be working out of the Village for now.
- Budget season is underway, with both the Selectboard and Village Trustees reviewing their respective budgets for FY 2027.

- Work is beginning on the Town and Village reports, with Meg Horrock's providing assistance again this year. The goal is to have both reports voted on by early January to be ready for the March Town Meeting Warning.
- Town Hall will close early on Friday at 2:45 PM for the staff holiday party and will also be closed on December 26th.

D. Interviews

Marketing Committee

Four candidates were scheduled for interviews, though only three appeared:

Nora Pepe introduced herself as the marketing manager at Billings Farm Museum for the past five years and a Woodstock resident for eight years with two children at the local school. She described her experience with external communications, content creation, and photography. Ms. Pepe emphasized her interest in collaboration and community partnerships, noting her participation in the Woodstock organizing committee for the past two years.

Aimee Bartlett explained she grew up in the area and graduated from Woodstock Union High School. She currently lives in Springfield and works remotely for a global software company leading corporate transformation and strategy initiatives. Bartlett owns Vermont Wayfinders, offering guided tours around the Woodstock area, which gives her insight into visitors' perceptions and interests regarding the town.

Loren Fisher identified himself as a Village resident and co-owner of Focus Gallery on Central Street. He also runs a photography workshop business that brings people from around the world to Woodstock. Mr. Fisher noted that he serves as President of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and previously owned a marketing company in New Jersey. He emphasized the importance of good communication between the Chamber, Selectboard, Village Trustees, and Economic Development Personnel. Mr. Fisher also announced that the Chamber of Commerce has hired Jim Kelly as the new Executive Director.

E. Discussion

Homestead Filing Penalty

Eric Duffy explained that the Board has the ability to set a penalty (between 3-8%) for property owners who do not file their homestead declarations by the April 15th deadline. The discussion was preliminary, with a vote anticipated at the next meeting. The Board considered seeking input from the Assessors at the next meeting for more information. It was noted that nearby towns like Barnard and Warren already have this policy in place, with Warren charging the full 8% penalty. Roger LoganCommented on the

importance of clear communication if such a penalty is implemented, suggesting the Town send reminders before the filing deadline.

Way Finding Signs

Abbie Sherman presented a proposal to design comprehensive wayfinding signs and a Village map highlighting various amenities in Woodstock. She explained that many parks and attractions remain unknown even to locals, and wayfinding would help people discover more of what Woodstock offers. The design would be consistent across various locations, potentially including hiking trails in Marsh Billings-Rockerfeller National Park.

Abbie Sherman noted the project had been proposed in the Woodstock initiative of 2019-2020. She received an estimate from Wood and Woodsigns of Waitsfield for \$4,000-6,000 for the full design and map, with additional costs for actual sign construction. Ms. Sherman suggested the total might be closer to \$10,000 depending on the amount of back-and-forth required.

The board was supportive of the concept but raised concerns about funding. Eric Duffy suggested exploring sponsorship opportunities to help offset costs while maintaining a tasteful appearance.

Waste Water Plant Renovation Updates

Eric Duffy reported that a 30% design review had been forwarded to the Board that morning, including final design drawings and cost estimates. The current estimate is \$33-34 million, up slightly from \$30 million estimated the previous year. An in-depth meeting with plant operators is scheduled for January, and public forums are being planned for after the holidays.

Plaques and Monuments Policy

Eric Duffy reported that this item had been put on the back burner since winter has arrived and no new monuments would likely be installed soon. A meeting was scheduled for the following morning to discuss this further.

F. Vote

Update to Sewer/Water Guidelines

Eric Duffy explained that the Village Trustees had voted and passed guidelines for water and sewer bill abatements. Following a recent abatement request, the board asked for updates to ensure no abatement beyond three years could be granted.

Motion: by Chair Susan Ford to approve the guidelines for water and sewer abatements (6:30 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Marketing Contract

Eric Duffy recommended continuing services with Jess Kirby for the next year, noting she was doing a great job. The new contract includes her leadership of the marketing committee as part of her responsibilities. The contract structure changed from a monthly stipend to an hourly wage based on 20 hours per week (equivalent to her current stipend), with the possibility of approved overtime when necessary.

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the marketing contract for Jess Kirby
(6:31 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

EMS Per Capita fees to Subscribing Member Towns

The EMS per capita fees remained unchanged from the previous year. It was noted that the last fee increase occurred in 2020, and Woodstock's fees are significantly higher than neighboring Towns (approaching \$70 compared to around \$40 elsewhere).

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the Woodstock EMS per capita fee at last year's rates (6:32 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

G. FY27 Budget

Eric Duffy presented a preliminary budget with a 13% tax increase over the previous year. The most significant change was a request from the Fire/EMS department for five new employees .

Rodney Kenyon explained the staffing challenges, including difficulty finding qualified part-time personnel, which leads to overtime costs and staff burnout. The department currently operates with four two-person shifts working 24 hours on/72 hours off, with all full-time staff certified as both firefighters and EMTs or paramedics. The additional staff would allow for three-person shifts and include a dedicated training officer. Other budget items discussed included:

- A potential administrative position for the finance office (not included in the current draft)
- Combining the Fire and EMS budgets for efficiency
- Allocation of funds for capital reserves for fire equipment
- Potential movement of certain salaries from the Economic Development Fund to the operating budget

Eric Duffy noted the water budget would require a 60% increase in rates, largely due to necessary improvements and building reserves for future capital projects. The sewer budget showed a 9% increase, with \$100,000 allocated toward wastewater plant renovations.

The budget will be posted on the website, and another meeting will be scheduled in January for further discussion before the Town Warning deadline around January 15th.

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

Motion: by Susan Ford to enter executive session 1V.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; to Appointment of Marketing Committee (7:07 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Susan Ford to exit executive Session (7:13PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to appoint Nora Pepe and Aimee Bartlett to the Marketing Committee based on their extensive marketing experience and commitment to the community (6:13PM)

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

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

Motion: by Susan Ford to enter executive session to discuss a contract matter under 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(A) to discuss a potential contract that, after making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial (7:14PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell
Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Vice Chair Susan Ford to exit executive Session (7:26 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

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

Motion: by Susan Ford to enter executive 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; (7:27PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Vice Chair Susan Ford to exit executive Session (8:04 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

No Decision was made

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion: by Vice Chair Susan Ford approve the minutes 11.18.25 (8:05 PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

J. Other Business -None

K. Adjournment

Motion: by Vice Chair Susan Ford to adjourn the meeting(8:06PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar

Susan B. Ford

Raymond Bourgeois

Cliff Johnson

Keri Cole

Signature: Susan B. Ford

Susan B. Ford (Jan 23, 2026 16:55:43 EST)

Email: sford@townofwoodstock.org

Signature:



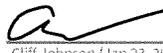
Email: lpowell@townofwoodstock.org

Signature: Raymond Bourgeois

Raymond Bourgeois (Jan 23, 2026 11:08:28 EST)

Email: rbourgeois@townofwoodstock.org

Signature:



Cliff Johnson (Jan 23, 2026 17:19:31 EST)

Email: cjohnson@townofwoodstock.org

Signature: 

Keri Cole (Jan 23, 2026 11:07:05 EST)

Email: kpcole@gmail.com