

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
February 19th 2026
5:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Chair Ray Bourgeois, Laura Powell, Cliff Johnson

Staff: Eric Duffy, Kitty Mears Koar, Abbie Sherman

Public: Kirsten DiPietro Warden (Lead Engineer), and Jon Olin (Senior Engineer) of Hoyle Tanner and Associates, Barbara Kennedy, Lynda Fulkerson, Steve Fulkerson, Ben Pauley, Charles Taylor

A. Call to order

Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of February 19th to order at 5:00 PM.

B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Liquor License – Pentangle 3rd Class

C. Citizen’s Comments -None

D. Main Wastewater Renovation Project Public Forum

Hoyle Tanner Presentation

Laura Powell noted the bond vote for the Main Wastewater Plant renovation is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, 2026. Absentee ballots are currently available, and in-person voting will be held at Town Hall from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Because the measure involves a bond, state statute requires it to appear on a paper ballot, necessitating the Tuesday vote rather than the Saturday Town Meeting format.

Project Background and Existing Conditions

Nicole Davis introduced the project, noting that the Wastewater treatment facility was originally constructed in 1968 with some upgrades along the way. A Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) process was initiated in 2023 to study necessary improvements, and in 2025 the study was revisited to incorporate research into new treatment technology.

Kirsten DiPietro Warden then provided a detailed walkthrough of the existing facility's deficiencies. She explained which structures would be demolished (headworks building, aeration tanks, clarifiers, and chlorine contact tank) and which would remain, noting that the demolished structures constitute the core of the facility's biological treatment and disinfection processes. Key findings included:

- **Headworks:** Equipment replaced approximately 20 years ago (2005–2006) has experienced severe corrosion from hydrogen sulfide and other sewer gases, affecting the building structure, lighting, and all metal components.
- **Aeration Tank:** Severe steel corrosion has compromised a structural beam supporting the divider wall between two treatment trains. Operators cannot lower

the water level on one side to perform required cleaning due to risk of catastrophic failure, which has degraded biological treatment performance. Concrete defects were also observed.

- **Clarifiers:** Concrete cracking and steel corrosion are present, and the clarifiers are undersized for peak hydraulic flows, which is problematic given inflow and infiltration into the collection system during rain events.
- **Chlorine Contact Tank:** Undersized for peak hydraulic flow and does not meet state standards for 30-minute disinfection contact time at peak flow, nor does it meet flood resilience standards.
- **Effluent Pump Station:** Built around 1975–1976 to boost flows during flood stage when the river level rises behind the Army Corps of Engineers berm, this station is over 50 years old, has only one pump, and is notably still operational.

DiPietro Warden summarized the project needs across four categories: aging infrastructure at the end of its useful life; flood resiliency, particularly the need for a reliable effluent pump station during elevated river levels; health and sanitation, as failure of any component could result in undisinfected or insufficiently treated wastewater being discharged to the Ottawaquechee River; and growth, as inadequate infrastructure could result in a moratorium on new connections, affecting restaurants, commercial businesses, and potential new development such as a brewery.

Proposed Technology: Aerobic Granular Sludge (AGS)

DiPietro Warden described the selected treatment technology — Aerobic Granular Sludge (AGS) — as newer to the United States but well-established in Europe, with approximately 30 to 40 installations now in the U.S. She characterized it as "truly going to be the way of the future for biological treatment." AGS works by growing dense, granular sludge through a longer sludge detention time. The granule's cross-section contains distinct zones: an outer aerobic zone for nitrification, a middle anoxic layer for denitrification, and an anaerobic core for phosphorus removal — allowing simultaneous nutrient removal in a single tank rather than the multiple tanks required by conventional activated sludge processes.

A live demonstration was referenced: on a prior public tour, a side-by-side comparison was shown of the existing plant sludge and an AGS sample. The existing sludge never settled, while the AGS sample settled within seconds of aeration being stopped, illustrating the dramatically superior settling characteristics (15 times that of conventional activated sludge).

Key attributes of AGS highlighted included: all treatment occurring in one reactor (two will be built for redundancy); cycle times that are adjustable for low or high flow conditions; self-sustaining biomass requiring no chemical addition; enhanced biological nutrient removal (BNR) capable of achieving total nitrogen below 3 mg/L and phosphorus below 1 mg/L; operational simplicity compared to conventional enhanced BNR systems; and a minimal footprint resulting in lower capital and installation costs.

DiPietro Warden also noted significant energy savings due to reduced air requirements and the elimination of return recycle pumping.

Proposed Process and Site Plan

DiPietro Warden walked through the proposed process flow: raw wastewater enters a new headworks building for screening and grit removal, then flows to an influent pump station with pre-equalization to dampen peak flows before feeding the two AGS biological reactors at a more constant rate. Treated effluent then passes through a new UV (ultraviolet) disinfection system — replacing the existing chemical-based disinfection — and flows through a Parshall flume for flow measurement before discharge to the river. Solids are wasted to sludge holding and then dewatered onsite via new dewatering equipment to be installed in one bay of the existing maintenance garage, eliminating the need to contract out dewatering services.

On the site plan, DiPietro Warden highlighted several forward-looking design elements: space is being reserved in the UV disinfection building for future tertiary filtration equipment should the state impose more stringent phosphorus limits in future permit cycles; the entire process is designed to be replicated on the footprint freed by demolition of existing structures, allowing the plant's capacity to be doubled in the future if needed; and all new buildings are designed to protect against the 500-year flood event, with finished floor elevations set at one foot above the 500-year flood elevation of 677.98 feet (approximately 679 feet). The existing operations building will also be renovated, including separating the main office from the laboratory, as operators are currently required to eat lunch in the laboratory where wastewater samples are analyzed — a condition that is not up to code.

DiPietro Warden noted that when asked what precipitated the study, the state's discharge permit requires a 20-year evaluation of facilities. She also confirmed that Woodstock will be the first plant in Vermont and second in New England to adopt AGS technology, while emphasizing it is not an experiment, as it is being implemented across the country.

Funding

Jon Olin presented the funding structure for the \$34,000,000 project. He emphasized that a positive Town vote is critical both to demonstrate readiness and to secure additional grant funding. Key funding sources included:

- **CWSRF (Clean Water State Revolving Fund) Loan:** Already secured for engineering services; being pursued for construction. Jon Olin highlighted the 2% interest rate as highly favorable for long-term repayment.
- **CDS STAG Grant (Congressional Directed Spending):** \$1,000,000 recently awarded, secured in partnership with Harry Falconer and the regional planning commission. Jon Olin noted this was a significant achievement given national competition.

- **EDA Disaster Supplemental Grant:** Currently being pursued in coordination with Abbie Sherman, with a potential range of \$2,000,000 to \$20,000,000.
- **CWSRF Pollution Control Grant:** Capacity up to \$3,000,000, though Olin cautioned that available funds are currently low and the full amount should not be anticipated.

Jon Olin clarified that the \$1,000,000 STAG grant is not yet reflected in the \$34,000,000 bond figure, and that the bond is being pursued for the full project cost while grants are sought to offset the community impact over time. Additional local funding mechanisms discussed included town reserves (managed and approved by the select board on an annual basis) and local option tax revenues, which are being modeled as sensitivity variables in a custom 30-year financial tool developed for the Town.

On user rates, Olin stated that an increase of approximately 50 percent over the next five years is anticipated, accounting for routine inflation, general operating cost changes, and the project itself. He emphasized that growth — by spreading costs across more users — represents a meaningful opportunity to reduce the per-user impact, though conservative modeling does not count on growth. The Town and Hoyle Tanner will review scenarios annually.

Jon Olin directed attendees to the project website at **woodstockmainwwtf.com** and closed with the project's mission statement: *"This investment benefits the entire community by protecting the water quality of the Ottauquechee River, supporting housing and economic growth, and ensuring reliable infrastructure for decades to come."*

Public Questions and Discussion

Following the presentation, several questions were raised from the floor and online.

Laura Powell noted the connection between the Wastewater project and the Selectboard's priority of adding housing, observing that the user rate impact could be significantly reduced by adding more connections, reinforcing the case for pursuing housing growth.

Steve Fulkerson asked about current and future design capacity. DiPietro Warden responded that the permitted capacity is 450,000 gallons per day and the plant is currently operating at approximately 50 percent of that. She noted the operational ceiling is 80 percent of permitted capacity, and that the remaining headroom could accommodate roughly 500 additional residential units.

Benjamin Pauley asked about odor implications of the new enclosed infrastructure. DiPietro Warden clarified that while some new buildings are enclosed, the AGS tanks and sludge holding tanks are open to the atmosphere, consistent with the existing process. She stated no change in odor conditions is anticipated and that conditions may in fact improve, though she could not quantify that.

Ben Pauley also asked about the Army Corps of Engineers berm, specifically whether it is tested and maintained. DiPietro Warden clarified that while the berm was built

by the Army Corps in the 1970s, it is owned by the Town, and the project does not involve any modifications to it. Its structural integrity is understood to be intact. Jon Olin added that flood elevations are subject to change over time based on observed events, and that USGS regression equations account for this; the current design protects structures to one foot above the 500-year flood elevation of approximately 678 feet, while the berm itself sits at 677 feet (roughly the 100-year elevation).

Ben Pauley further inquired about heat recovery from the treatment process. DiPietro Warden acknowledged that wastewater does generate recoverable heat and that heat exchange systems exist, but explained this was not part of the current design due to considerable cost and the fact that Woodstock's plant is relatively small. She noted that such systems have been designed for larger facilities like South Burlington. She also noted that the batch process creates periods of no effluent flow, which is not well-suited for effluent heat recovery.

Charles Taylor asked how long the new BNR system would last before requiring further technology upgrades. DiPietro Warden explained that AGS is expected to be the industry's future direction and will increasingly be adopted nationally and across New England. She noted that getting a capacity increase from the state is highly unlikely; instead, facilities will be required to treat to higher standards with existing permitted flows. She confirmed Woodstock will be the first Vermont facility to use this technology. She also reiterated that mechanical components in the corrosive headworks environment have a roughly 20-year replacement cycle, and that the Town should plan reserves accordingly, while concrete and underground piping have life expectancies exceeding 50 years. DiPietro Warden noted that the current constraint is not capacity but rather the ability of the existing biological process to handle increased organic loading without upgrade — and that the new design accommodates future expansion by duplicating the process on the cleared footprint.

Ben Pauley also asked whether the plant would require upgrades within 15 years given projected growth. DiPietro Warden and a board member clarified that current hydraulic capacity is not the limiting factor in the near term, but that without the upgrade, the existing aeration tanks could not handle the full organic load from increased housing over the longer term. DiPietro Warden also noted that the facility's discharge permit — currently overdue for renewal on its five-year cycle — will include a new, more stringent phosphorus limitation, which at a minimum would require chemical addition if the upgrade is not completed.

DiPietro Warden and Nicole Davis confirmed those figures are in the PER amendment, which is publicly available through the state of Vermont DEC's website, and that the AGS alternative was the least-cost option among the three alternatives studied. A video recording of a prior public presentation covering those details was noted as being available, with a link to be shared.

E. Town Meeting Prep

Laura Powell provided an announcement about the upcoming Town Meeting. Woodstock votes over two days: in-person voting on **Saturday, February 28** at 10:00 AM downstairs at Town Hall, covering Articles 1 through 8 (Town budget, Water budget, Sewer budget, and other articles); and by paper ballot on **Tuesday, March 3** on the remaining articles (approximately Articles 9 through 25), which includes the Wastewater treatment bond (statutorily required to be on the paper ballot), special articles for local organizations, elected officials, and the school district ballot. The board members encouraged attendance at the Saturday meeting, noting healthy discussion typically occurs around the budget process. Childcare for children ages 4 and up through Change the World Kids was noted as being arranged.

F. Liquor License

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve a First-Class restaurant liquor license for Pentangle Arts Council, assuming the state has completed its due diligence review. (6:01 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve a third-Class restaurant liquor license for Pentangle Arts Council, assuming the state has completed its due diligence review. (6:02 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

E. Adjournment

Motion: by Laura Powell to adjourn the meeting (6:02 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar