

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
April 21st 2026
6:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Vice Chair Laura Powell, Cliff Johnson, Norm Frates Jr.

Staff: Eric Duffy, Greg Fullerton, Molly Maxham

Public: Gay Travers, Nicholas Seldon, Peter Shoemaker, Barbara Otranto, Jim Otranto, Peggy Fraser, Roger Logan, Byron Kelly, Loren Fisher, Sally Garmon, Kate Harvey, Susie Stulz, Kevin Lynch

A. Call to order

Vice Chair Laura Powell called the Selectboard meeting of April 21st to order at 6:00PM.

**B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda
Sewer Abatement – 19 Pleasant**

C. Citizen's Comments

Peggy Fraser asked about protocols for getting questions answered by the Board, noting that while citizens can ask questions during citizen comments that can be answered immediately, other items require two weeks' notice to be placed on the agenda. She requested clarification on how citizens can communicate questions and receive answers from the Board. Vice Chair Laura Powell noted this would be addressed later in the agenda under rules of procedure discussion.

Gay Travers requested that the number of attendees be included in meeting minutes as a reflection of community engagement. Vice Chair Laura Powell explained the challenge of capturing accurate attendance numbers without requiring sign-in for in-person attendees, as only those making citizen comments have their names recorded.

Nicholas Seldon addressed human resources concerns involving Manager Duffy's management style. Mr. Seldon also referenced a Woodstock police report involving a Village Trustee, expressing concern about what he characterized as a pattern of behavior.

D. Manager's Report

Personnel Changes: The Village highway department lost employee Nate Marcotte, who worked for approximately 2.5 years before leaving to start his own company. Eric Duffy praised Nate's work ethic and contributions, including weekend trash pickup during foliage season and sidewalk repairs.

Green Up Day: Vermont's Green Up Day is scheduled for May 2nd, with bag pickup available from 7:30-10:30 AM outside town hall. Public Works Director Greg Fullerton will provide dumpsters at the Town garage for collected trash.

Audit Update: The Town is still awaiting the draft audit, which was expected last week. The auditor indicated completion was pending a few small items. Once received, staff will review for errors, respond to any findings, and schedule a Joint meeting with both Boards before publishing the final audit online.

Property Tax Assessment: April 15th was the deadline for homestead filing. Late filers will face a 3% fine as previously established by the Select board. Reappraisal consultants have contacted about 30% of homes and completed 96 interior inspections, representing approximately 5% of total properties. Mr. Duffy encouraged residents to allow interior inspections for more accurate assessments.

Village Planning: The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on May 6th regarding Village Bylaw Updates, the culmination of an 18-month process. If approved, the matter will proceed to a Village Trustees vote in late May or early June.

Infrastructure Projects: Hydrant flushing was completed with thanks to residents and the Woodstock Inn for their patience. The work must be conducted during daylight hours for visibility and safety reasons. A kickoff meeting was held with VHB for the Elm Street Bridge environmental assessment, expected to be completed by end of July to allow for fall construction.

Emergency Services Statistics: Fire EMS responded to 69 EMS calls, 29 fire calls, and conducted 9 building inspections in March. The newest ambulance is operational and staff received additional training. Police had 305 incidents, 102 motor stops, issued 64 tickets and 38 warnings totaling \$10,880 in fines, and conducted 24 foot patrols in the Village.

Tax and Utility Bills: Tax bills are due May 1st at 4:30 PM, with late penalties applying after. Water and Sewer bills were mailed last week covering nine months of service, due in early June. The Water Department budget approved at last year's Town meeting resulted in doubled Water Rates as anticipated. Eric Duffy addressed customer service concerns, asking residents with billing complaints to contact him directly (eduffy@townofwoodstock.org) rather than directing frustration at staff members.

E. Finance Report

Eric Duffy presented the financial report, highlighting several key points about the Town's fiscal position as of late April, approximately two months before the June 30th fiscal year end. Eric Duffy explained that the actual revenue figures for taxes shown in the report reflect the Town's accounting method of recognizing revenue when bills are issued rather

than when collected. He noted that while the Town collects education taxes and forwards them to the state, only the locally retained portion appears in their revenue recognition.

The Town is performing well on revenue, coming within \$70,000-\$80,000 of their revenue goal, not including \$140,000 in per capita invoice fees that have been received but not yet allocated. Some additional revenue came from unbudgeted grants, contributing to the positive revenue picture.

For expenses, Eric Duffy presented internal projection sheets rather than standard SAS reports, explaining that the Finance Office updates these projections every two weeks to account for anticipated expenses through the fiscal year end. He and the Finance Director meet biweekly, and the Finance Director meets with all department heads biweekly to monitor budgets closely as the fiscal year concludes.

Several departments are showing budget challenges. Dispatch is trending toward a deficit due to overtime costs from short staffing and a new contract that wasn't finalized during budget preparation. However, \$43,000 was allocated elsewhere in the budget to offset dispatch expenses. Fire and EMS are running approximately \$60,000-\$70,000 over budget, primarily due to overtime costs from staffing shortages.

Eric Duffy noted that expenses for Economic Development Director Abbie Sherman's conferences and travel have come from the general fund rather than the local option tax fund that pays her salary, as the Board only approved using that fund for her salary specifically. He indicated this could be reallocated at year-end if the board chooses.

The general fund shows \$7,000-\$8,000 over budget due to a Sewer Department expense that will be reallocated through a journal entry before year-end.

Based on current projections, Eric Duffy estimated an unaudited surplus of approximately \$180,000 at fiscal year-end, down from a \$300,000 projection made 2-3 months earlier. He emphasized that projections change as circumstances evolve.

Most departments are projected to finish with small surpluses despite some salary overruns, as spending has been reduced in other areas to compensate.

Mr. Seldon questioned the reliability of Eric Duffy's \$180,000 surplus projection. Vice Chair Laura Powell responded that there would be an audit, and Mr. Seldon could participate in that public process.

Barbara Otranto asked about audit expenses, referencing a \$1,400 allocation mentioned at Town meeting that Charlie Kimball had questioned as insufficient.

Vice Chair Laura Powell clarified this referred to the public funds audit, which is separate from the main Town audit. These public funds represent various bequests and endowments overseen by the Trustees of Public Funds. Eric Duffy corrected that the Trustee of Public Fund audit is part of the larger Town audit. The main Town audit budget is approximately \$50,000, with Vice Chair Laura Powell noting that costs may increase if they need to find a new auditor due to timing issues with the current firm.

Gay Travers requested that Police call reports be categorized to show the types of incidents rather than just total numbers, noting this would provide better insight into Police activity. Vice Chair Laura Powell agreed this would be useful and said they would work on providing categorized data.

Sally Garmon expressed concern about the lack of Police reports in the Vermont Standard newspaper for over six months. She questioned whether the police department was being utilized effectively since there was no visible reporting of their activities. Ms. Garmon said she had contacted the Vermont Standard, which indicated they receive reports that aren't suitable for publication, and she requested someone investigate the situation.

Peter Shoemaker criticized the water rate implementation, calling it "disingenuous" and noting the board had nine months to create a proper rate structure rather than implementing what he characterized as a basic increase that shifted costs from commercial to residential users.

F. Discussion

Chamber Budget

Chamber of Commerce President Loren Fisher presented requests for local option tax funding totaling \$36,700. He emphasized that all requested funds would go directly to events and items, not Chambers operations or staff.

The breakdown included:

- Wassail Weekend: \$15,000 requested from total \$22,700 budget (Chamber contributing \$5,700 cash plus significant staff time)
- Flower Baskets: \$10,000 total (\$3,000 for flowers and soil, \$7,000 for daily watering through summer)
- Tree lights: \$3,000 for installation and removal (tree companies can no longer donate time)
- Wireless Woodstock: \$1,500 for equipment and installation (already completed - Wi-Fi now operational across the Green, currently password-protected with plans for open access)

Mr. Fisher noted the Chamber of Commerce was withdrawing their request for Fourth Friday project funding. The total request represents approximately 8.3% of local option tax revenue. Roger's position as the long-time flower basket tender was changing due to his back injury, but replacement arrangements were made.

Questions arose about relying on volunteer labor versus paid services. Mr. Fisher explained that the scope of work, particularly for tree lights requiring expensive equipment, had become too expensive to expect as volunteer contributions.

Rules of Procedures for Public Meetings

Vice Chair Laura Powell presented materials for establishing formal rules of procedure to support the Joint Board goal of effective and efficient government. The discussion aimed to improve meeting management and guide public expectations.

Materials included:

- Zoom instruction handouts from Mary Anne Sweeney
- VLCT Selectboard agenda request form template
- Rules of procedure examples from Pomfret, Dover, and Hartford
- VLCT model rules for municipal public bodies

Vice Chair Laura Powell noted uncertainty about whether other Towns use the formal agenda request form. Board members Norm Frates and Cliff Johnson favored simplifying

materials while maintaining transparency about agenda-setting processes and public participation guidelines.

Public comments emphasized the balance between comprehensive information and accessibility. Susie Stulz suggested providing guidance on appropriate topics for board consideration versus staff consultation or informal discussion. Gay Travers expressed concern that formal processes could make civic engagement feel unwelcoming, advocating for simplicity and maintaining Woodstock's traditional citizen-friendly approach.

Roger Logan supported procedural approaches for fairness but emphasized the need to prevent inappropriate agenda items while ensuring proper public comment protocols and maintaining decorum standards.

The discussion will continue at future meetings before adopting any formal procedures, with emphasis on balancing transparency with efficiency and maintaining community accessibility.

Porta Potties at Vondell-Cobb

Eric Duffy presented a request from WAMBA for Town funding of a portable toilet at the Vondell-Cobb property parking area. The estimated cost was \$180 per month from April through October/November for one unit to serve riders, particularly female riders who prefer this option to natural alternatives.

Board members Norm Frates and Cliff Johnson expressed support for the idea given the Town's ownership and recreational use of the property. However, several concerns were raised during public comments.

Peggy Fraser questioned whether this would create expectations for similar facilities at other recreational areas like Mount Tom. Barbara Otranto raised concerns about vandalism and maintenance based on observed littering and party behavior at Cox District locations, questioning whether users who don't properly dispose of trash would respect a portable facility.

Susie Stulz advocated for the accommodation, specifically noting the needs of older women who prefer not to use woods. Kevin Lynch suggested a trial period for the season with garbage cans and signage encouraging cleanliness. Jim Otranto called for aesthetic considerations to screen the facility from road view. Peter Shoemaker opposed the idea, arguing that bathroom planning is part of outdoor recreation and expressing concern about setting precedent for additional amenities.

The discussion emphasized different perspectives on balancing convenience, maintenance concerns, aesthetic impact, and the appropriate level of infrastructure for outdoor recreation areas. The matter will be returned for further consideration.

G. Votes

Sewer Abatement

The board considered a sewer rate abatement request for 19 Pleasant Street, moving the property from a double flat rate to a single flat rate due to a death at the residence. Manager Duffy confirmed the property was already being billed at the single unit rate.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to abate the sewer rate moving forward from a double to a single for 19 Pleasant Street. (7:13 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Liquor License

The board approved multiple liquor license applications as the local liquor control board.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to approve liquor licences for Worthy Kitchen- 1st, 3rd OCP, Shine – 2nd and Tobacco, Pizza Chef – 1st, Village Inn- 1st, 3rd, OCP, Sante- 1st, 3rd, Cumberland- 2nd, Bern LLC – 1st, 3rd, OCP (7:14 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Planning Commission – Kate Harvey

Kate Harvey applied for appointment to the Planning Commission. She introduced herself as a landscape architect and partner in a national design firm, recently relocated to Woodstock from outside New England. Ms. Harvey expressed enthusiasm for sustainable and resilient planning and curiosity about improving small Town governance. She confirmed commitment to attending at least 80% of meetings and had already attended several planning commission meetings.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to appoint Kate Harvey to the Planning Commission. (7:16 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Local Emergency Management Plan

Eric Duffy presented the Annual local Emergency Management Plan approval, noting this was a standard two-page submission since the overall plan had not changed.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to approve the local emergency management plan. (7:17 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

GovWell -Permitting Contract

Zoning Administrator Molly Maxham requested approval to transition from iWorq to GovWell permitting software. She explained that iWorq had failed to meet expectations after 1.5 years, while GovWell offered more features and better user-friendliness for residents. GovWell also offered to buy out the existing iWork contract. The software will be used by both Village and Town, with costs split through the existing professional services budget arrangement.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to approve the GovWell permitting contract. (7:19 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

May 19th Meeting Change

Eric Duffy requested changing the May 19th meeting date due to his unavailability, noting conflicts with Memorial Day (May 26th) and a Tuesday Town Development meeting. The board has agreed to move the meeting to Thursday, May 28th at 6:00 PM.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to change the May 19th meeting to May 28th at 6 PM (7:20 PM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Creation of a Housing and Economic Development Task Force

Economic Development Director Abbie Sherman's proposal for a housing and Economic Development task force generated extensive discussion. The proposal called for minimum five members appointed by the Selectboard with staggered three-year terms, with Planning Commission liaison representation. The primary focus would be housing solutions, though the broader Economic Development strategy was also outlined.

Roger Logan recommended focusing exclusively on housing rather than broader Economic Development, arguing that housing represents the critical component of Economic Development and that broader scope could lead to loss of focus. He suggested learning from the previous Economic Development Commission's experience of discussing many topics without moving forward significantly on major initiatives.

Peter Shoemaker emphasized the need for concrete action rather than additional committee discussion, advocating for the Board to identify specific properties and funding mechanisms, then present clear proposals to voters. He cited successful examples like Twin Pines Housing Developments and suggested the board committed to specific dollar amounts and sites rather than forming another committee.

Byron Kelly agreed with keeping the focus simple and action-oriented rather than adding bureaucratic layers.

Eric Duffy defended the committee concept as bringing necessary expertise through developers and real estate professionals that staff lacks, emphasizing action over discussion similar to the water working group model.

Vice Chair Laura Powell proposed simplifying the language and working with Abbie Sherman to clarify the action-oriented focus and discipline expected, with the matter returning for further discussion and possible vote at the next meeting.

Water System Project Bid Recommendation

Eric Duffy presented the recommendation to select MSK Engineers for the Water System improvement projects following interviews conducted April 6th with three firms. The evaluation team of Eric Duffy, Stephanie Appelfeller, and Abbie Sherman rated firms on understanding, expertise, experience, communication, knowledge, cost control, and team strength. MSK scored highest among the three qualified candidates.

The project encompasses two components: replacement well on Route 12 and pipe upgrade from River Road to the recreation center bridge (known as Option 1B). The timeline projects completion by December 2027, with the goal of reaching hydrant capacity and enabling new village water connections.

Peter Shoemaker questioned the procurement approach of selecting the firm before negotiating costs, expressing concern about potential cost overruns without competitive pricing. Eric Duffy explained this follows the Town's procurement policy for professional services, similar to recent school district practices, where technical qualifications are evaluated first followed by cost negotiations with the selected firm.

[Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to accept the project bid for MSK Engineers for the water system projects. \(7:43 PM\)](#)

[Seconded: by Cliff Johnson](#)

[Vote: 3-0-0, passed](#)

Approval for Purchase of DPW Truck

Public Works Director Greg Fullerton requested approval for purchasing a new Western Star truck with plow and sander to replace a 2018 Freightliner. The total cost was \$280,622 with a \$60,000 trade-in value, resulting in a net cost of \$220,622. Annual financing costs would be approximately \$46,000-\$50,000, with \$83,000 currently in capital reserves and \$30,000 budgeted for next year.

Greg Fullerton explained this truck was prioritized because the warranty had expired and it had experienced two breakdowns requiring repairs. Other equipment still under warranty would be addressed later. He noted supply chain challenges with year-plus delivery times and upcoming emissions regulations that will increase costs, making immediate purchase advantageous.

[Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. moved to approve the purchase of the DPW truck. \(7:52 PM\)](#)

[Seconded: by Cliff Johnson](#)

[Vote: 3-0-0, passed](#)

Approval of Minutes

The board approved minutes from March 10th, postponing April 7th minutes pending review of submitted edits.

[Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. moved to approve the minutes from March 10th. \(7:54 PM\)](#)

[Seconded: by Cliff Johnson](#)

[Vote: 3-0-0, passed](#)

H. Adjournment

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr.to adjourn the meeting (7:54 PM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar