

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
May 28th 2026
6:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

24 attendances in person and 20 on Zoom

Present: Chair Susan Ford, Cliff Johnson, Norm Frates Jr.

Staff: Eric Duffy, Kitty Mears Koar

Public: Nicholas Seldon, Bonnie Clement, John Steinle, Wendy Marrinan, Al Alessi, Steve Fulkerson, Lynda Fulkerson, Susie Stulz, Susan Neuberg, Officer Anna Ingraham, Dick Sweeney, Mary Ann Sweeney, Clay Reed, Barbara Kennedy, Marybeth Defalco, Sofia Lanlois, Michelle Sutherland, Byron Kelly, Eric Nesbitt, Peter Shoemaker, Margaret Fraser, Deborah Gravel, Gay Travers, Susan Chiefsky, Wendy Spector, Peggy Fraser, Sally Garmon, Roger Logan, William Boardman, Alison Taylor, Barbara Otranto, Jennifer Belton, Astrid Hoyt, Jenreva Wetmore

A. Call to order

Chair Susan Ford called the Selectboard meeting of May 28th to order at 5:00PM.

B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Appointment of Selectboard Member after Executive Session

**Selection of Selectboard Vice Chair and Back Up Warrant Signatory to
votes**

C. Citizen Comments

Nicholas Seldon raised concerns for Municipal employees who had resigned. He also commented on a public records request for a police report.

Gay Travers asked that the number of attendees—both in-person and online—be recorded in the meeting minutes. Chair Susan Ford acknowledged the request and confirmed a sign-in sheet would be circulated. The Board agreed to record attendance numbers going forward.

Susan Neuberg asked how citizens' comments are addressed by the Selectboard and how they make it onto a future agenda for full discussion. Chair Susan Ford explained that items are noted and reviewed by the Chair and Vice Chair when forming future agendas. Chair Susan Ford indicated that items would be followed up as appropriate and that some matters fall under Village—rather than Town—jurisdiction.

Sally Garmon raised a concern about a perennial garden she and another resident have maintained for approximately twenty years on College Hill at Route 4. Ms. Garmon

explained that a recent road repair project had covered the garden area with gravel, mesh, and grass seed, making replanting impossible. She stated that Eric Duffy had offered a \$200 credit toward bagged topsoil from a local hardware store, but that she was over 80 years old and found this solution inadequate. She requested that the Town restore the topsoil properly. Chair Susan Ford confirmed the matter had been referred to the Village, as the property in question falls under Village jurisdiction. Cliff Johnson offered to assist as a volunteer with any labor involved.

D. Manager's Report

- Summer Hours: Effective immediately, Town Hall will close at noon on Fridays for most staff. The Municipal Manager and Finance Director typically remain until 2:00–3:00 PM on Fridays, and the Manager's email contact is posted on the door for urgent matters.
- Water System Upgrades: Eric Duffy and Stephanie Appelfeller are scheduled to travel to Montpelier the following Monday to meet with consultants and Agency of Natural Resources representatives to advance the permanent permitting process for water system upgrades. An update was expected for the Board by Tuesday morning.
- Public Works Staffing: A job offer has been extended to a public works crew member. Eric Duffy expressed optimism that the offer would be accepted, which would bring public works back to full staffing in time for summer.
- FY25 Audit: The FY25 audit for the Town and Village is complete. A final copy is pending delivery from the auditors. The audit is largely clean, with a few findings related to accounting processes. Once received, the audit will be posted to the Town website and a meeting will be scheduled with the auditors and both Boards to review the findings.

E. Financial Report

On the General Fund, revenues are tracking above budget, though Eric Duffy cautioned that the tax revenue figure of approximately \$6.68 million is recognized when billed rather than when received, and therefore may not reflect actual collections to date. The final education fund payment to the state had just been sent, and a clearer picture of accounts receivable would be available shortly.

The overall General Fund projection indicates a surplus of approximately \$200,000, though Eric noted this figure will likely settle closer to \$100,000 by mid-June as remaining expenses, including road striping, come through.

Two areas of concern were highlighted:

- Fire/EMS: Salaries and benefits are significantly over budget due to a shortage of part-time staff, requiring full-time employees to be paid overtime at time-and-a-half. The department is nonetheless projected to come in under budget overall through

reductions in other line items. The Board previously voted to add 2.5 new positions, with two starting July 1 and one starting January 1, which is expected to alleviate ongoing staffing pressures.

- Dispatch: Trending approximately \$44,000 over budget, attributable to employee absences, overtime coverage, and the cost of training new staff while maintaining dual coverage. Dispatch is projected to end the year with a small deficit, which will be offset by surpluses elsewhere.

Roger Logan thanked the Municipal Manager and staff for their professional approach to budget management. A comment was also made suggesting that better public communication around road striping schedules—such as posting advance notice on the Town website—would be appreciated.

F. Interviews

Interviews for Appointment of Selectboard Vacancies

Eric Duffy noted that all applicants had been provided in advance with four questions to address and were asked to keep their presentations to five minutes. He also clarified that:

- Regardless of any appointment made that evening, a Selectboard election is scheduled for **August 11**, at which all open seats would be contested. Any person, whether appointed or not, may run in that election.
- Petitions for candidacy are available at the back of the room and must be submitted by **July 6**.
- One applicant, Mr. Robert Cole, had withdrawn his name from consideration prior to the meeting.

The Board conducted interviews with the following candidates:

Susan Chiefsky, Gay Travers, Eric Nesbitt, Byron Kelly, Richard (Dick) Sweeney Marybeth Sweeney, Clayton (Clay) Reed

G. Discussion

FY25 Legal Fees

Chair Susan Ford read a prepared statement addressing the expenditure of Municipal funds on a personnel matter currently before the courts. The following key points were presented:

During FY24, a total of **\$102,236.26** was spent on legal fees related to a single personnel matter. Of that amount, **\$75,072.89** was paid from municipal (Town) funds rather than solely from Village funds. The rationale offered was that the municipality had been noticed and eventually became a party to the lawsuit, creating a vested interest in securing quality legal representation to limit liability for both the Village and the municipality. It was

further noted that Village properties comprise approximately one-third of total municipal tax receipts and that the municipal tax supports services enjoyed by Village residents.

Chair Susan Ford acknowledged that, in retrospect, the decision to expend funds outside the approved budget should have been brought to a vote in an open meeting. She stated clearly that this was not an intentional act of concealment, attributing the oversight to an exceptionally busy period during which the Board was simultaneously managing the acquisition of the water company, securing bonds of \$8.3 million, and working with engineers on a wastewater treatment plant project exceeding \$30 million. She noted that she had attended approximately 35 meetings in the first six months of 2025.

Chair Susan Ford outlined several transparency initiatives the Board has undertaken since she became Chair, including: conducting fewer executive sessions, holding a Vermont League of Cities and Towns training session publicly rather than privately, openly discussing a conservation contract that could have been held in executive session, and releasing an attorney opinion letter by waiving attorney-client privilege. Going forward, the Board has engaged a separate law firm to handle FOIA, open meeting law, and other matters directed to the Board, in order to provide clearer expense tracking. The ongoing personnel matter remains with the original firm but is currently covered by insurance. Additionally, the Board is establishing a process for the Chair to review journal entries to track all municipal payments.

Alison Taylor asked for the date of the meeting at which the expenditure was discussed among the Selectboard and requested that the video recording of that meeting be made publicly available again. She also sought clarification on who specifically authorized the expenditure and whether a vote was taken. Chair Susan Ford indicated that notes would be taken and that questions would be addressed in a future meeting or by email, as pending litigation precluded answering questions at that time.

Eric Nesbitt asked whether the precedent of the Town paying the Village's legal fees would occur again without voter approval. Chair Susan Ford stated, "No." Cliff Johnson added that while he was not on the Board during the period in question, he would expect any such expenditure in the future to be subject to a vote, and would examine individual circumstances carefully.

William Boardman characterized the transfer as potentially "extralegal if not unlawful" and suggested the Town should seek to recover those funds, noting that one effect of the transfer was to make the Village's financial position appear more favorable.

Byron Kelly asked whether the Town attorney should have sought to have the Town discharged from the lawsuit, given the Town's role as a contracting party rather than a direct actor.

Dick Sweeney suggested the Board consider adopting a "meaningful event" threshold—perhaps \$25,000 to \$50,000—to flag significant unbudgeted expenditures for formal board notice.

Jennifer Belton thanked the Board for its volunteer service and expressed that many in the community appreciate the work being done.

Barabara Otranto stated that despite the explanation of how Town funds were used for Village legal costs she still felt that her pockets were picked. The caveat that only 1% of the total budget was diverted from the Town for this Village expense without a vote was not sitting well with her, and she wanted the Selectboard to hear her view on this issue.

Chair Susan Ford moved to table items E, F and G under discussion on the agenda to the following Tuesday's meeting, to allow adequate time for staff to prepare responses.

Town Accounts Payable and Warrant Procedure

Chair Susan Ford provided an overview of the Municipality's accounts payable and warrant process. The procedure involves multiple layers of review: department heads submit requests confirming compliance with procurement policy and budget availability; the Finance Officer verifies legality, adequacy of funds, and accuracy; the Municipal Manager performs a further review; and the Town Treasurer reviews warrants against invoices. A member of the Selectboard and Village Trustees then independently reviews checks and all associated invoices before the full list of checks and purposes is distributed to every Board member and Trustee for sign-off.

Chair Susan Ford noted that since becoming Chair in March, she has been personally reviewing every check and invoice, frequently asking questions about proper cost allocation between departments such as water and sewer.

Eric Duffy added that informal meetings between department heads and the Finance Office also occur regularly to discuss available funds and appropriate allocations.

Chair Susan Ford announced that, going forward, journal entries will be added to the warrant review list to be reviewed and approved by both Boards, closing the gap that allowed the legal fee transfers to occur without Board-level visibility.

Selection of Selectboard Vice Chair

Eric Duffy noted that in a standard nomination scenario the nominated person would typically abstain from voting; however, given the board's current three-member composition, the nominee would need to vote.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to nominate Norm Frates Jr as the
Selectboard Vice Chair (7:18 PM)
Seconded: by Chair Susan Ford

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Back Up Warrant Signatory

Chair Susan Ford explained the need for a backup warrant signatory to cover periods when the Chair is unavailable. The Board discussed the practicalities, including the concern that the Vice Chair also travels frequently. The possibility of a third backup was briefly discussed. Chair Susan Ford expressed a preference for keeping warrant signing authority within the Selectboard rather than having the Village sign Town warrants.

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to nominate Cliff Johnson as Back Up Warrant Signatory (7:19 PM)

Seconded: by Chair Susan Ford

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

H. Votes

Vermont 100 Endurance Race – Permit

The Board reviewed the application for the Vermont 100 Endurance Race, celebrating its 35th year. Chair Susan Ford briefly inquired whether all roads used by the race—including dirt roads—were reflected in the application. It was confirmed that the course through Woodstock has remained the same for 35 years and that the roads listed in the application are accurate for the Woodstock portion of the route. A certificate of insurance was confirmed to be included in the application.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson moved to approve the Vermont 100 Endurance Race permit (7:21PM)

Seconded: by Norm Frates Jr.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Liquor License

Chair Susan Ford presented the following liquor license applications for approval, conditioning approval on the state's review of each application, noting the state no longer provides the municipality with sufficient information to conduct its own independent review.

- Woodstock Resort Corporation – 1st, 2nd, 3rd class, and Outdoor Consumption Permit (OCP)
- Woodstock Farmers' Market – 2nd class
- Farmer and the Bell – OCP
- Acadian Enterprises, LLC – OCP
- Woodstock Country Club – 1st, 3rd class, and OCP
- Kelly Way Gardens – 1st, 3rd class, and OCP

Motion: by Cliff Johnson moved to approve the listed liquor licenses, conditioned upon state review. (7:23PM)

Seconded: by Norm Frates Jr.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Request to Harvest Trees along Town's Right of Way

The Board discussed the memo regarding trees on Arthur Morgan Road that will succumb to Ash borer disease. The Department of Public Works Director Greg Fullerton was unable to attend the meeting tonight. The item was tabled until the June 2nd meeting.

CDBG-DR Riverside Mobile Home Park Grant Agreement

Jenreva Wetmore, Executive Director of Sustainable Woodstock, presented the grant agreement. She explained that the CDBG-DR (Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery) grant supports long-term flood planning and mitigation work at Riverside Mobile Home Park. The Town of Woodstock is the formal grantee, while Sustainable Woodstock serves as the subgrantee. The grant agreement requires the legislative body to adopt a resolution accepting the terms and conditions of the grant and designating authorized signatories—the Municipal Manager on behalf of the Town, and Ms. Wetmore on behalf of Sustainable Woodstock.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson moved to accept the CDBG-DR Riverside Mobile Home Park Grant Agreement as presented, authorizing the Municipal Manager and Jennifer Wetmore as authorized signatories. (7:26 PM)

Seconded: by Norm Frates Jr.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

The grant agreement was signed by Board members immediately following the vote.

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

Discussion: Appointment of New Selectboard Members

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) to discuss 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 reason for its final decision during the open meeting. (7:27PM)

Seconded: by Norm Frates

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to exit executive Session (7:34 PM)

Seconded: by Norm Frates Jr.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

J. Appointment of Selectboard Members:

Motion: by Cliff Johnson moved to appoint Gay Travers and Richard (Dick) Sweeney to the Selectboard for the term from May 28,

2026 through the August 11, 2026, election (7:35 PM)
Seconded: by Norm Frates Jr.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

In accordance with Vermont statute requiring the Board to explain its reasoning in open session, a Board member stated that the appointments were made with the primary goal of maintaining objectivity heading into the August election and fostering community cohesion. Both appointees had indicated they would not seek election in August, thereby allowing for a fair and open election process uninfluenced by incumbency. The Board also acknowledged the strong qualifications of both appointees and encouraged all other candidates who were not appointed to run in the August 11 election. Petition forms were available at the back of the room, with a filing deadline of July 6. Eric Duffy requested that both newly appointed members remain after the meeting to be sworn in.

K. Approval of Minutes

Motion: by Norm Frates Jr. to approve the May 5, 2026 meeting
minutes (7:37PM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

L. Adjournment

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to adjourn the meeting (7:37PM)

Seconded: by Norm Frates Jr.

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar