Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
June 2nd 2026
8:30 AM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes

Draft minutes are subject to approval.
18 In person, 11 on Zia Zoom
Present: Chair Susan Ford, Cliff Johnson, Gay Travers, Dick Sweeney
Staff: Eric Duffy, Kitty Mears Koar, Stephanie Appelfeller, Kathy Avellino, Robert Densmore
Public: Mark Lanlois, Nate Freund, Lynda Fulkerson, Steve Fulkerson, Peter Shoemaker, Charlie Rattigan, Tom Debevoise III, Byron Kelly, Eric Nesbitt, Bonnie Clement, Michael Brands, Brad Ruderman, Cliff Harper, Alison Taylor, Andrew Heyward, Emma Stanton, Jon Spector, Melissa Spear, Wendy Spector, Nicholas Seldon

A. Call to order

Cliff Johnson called the Selectboard meeting of June 2nd to order at 8:30 AM.

Motion: by Dick Sweeney to make Cliff Johnson the presiding officer until Chair Susan Ford arrival (8: 34 AM)
Seconded: by Gay Travers

Vote: 3-0-0, passed

B. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Billings Farm abatements
Update to the Finance Committee
Update on water system improvements
Communication from Town Hall item
Town Hall cameras discussion

C. Citizen Comments

Peter Shoemaker noted his prior professional relationship with Chair Susan Ford for transparency purposes. He expressed the view that the improper reallocation of funds — which he characterized as an illegal process — should not fall solely on one Board member to address. He called for a third-party investigation into how the fund transfers were authorized and who directed the relevant journal entries, arguing that the Municipal Manager bore responsibility for allowing this to occur given his knowledge of the legal requirements for fund reallocation votes. Nicholas Seldon echoed these concerns.

D. Votes

Sewer Abatement – 213 Butternut Lane

Finance Director Robert Densmore presented the request from the property owner at 213 Butternut Lane to be moved from a family flat rate to a double flat rate, as only two persons currently reside at the property.

Motion: by Gay Travers to approve the sewer billing adjustment for 213 Butternut Lane from the family rate to the double rate (8: 44 AM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement – Billings Farm

Robert Densmore and Mark Lanlois, presented abatement requests for multiple Billings Farm accounts. The central issue concerned the farm's dairy production facility (account 21-51-02-001), which had been billed for full sewer usage despite the fact that a significant portion of water consumed by the cattle does not re-enter the municipal sewer system. Robert's analysis estimated approximately 4,000 cubic feet of sewer-attributable usage per nine-month billing cycle.

The Board discussed whether to assign a flat rate or a metered/percentage-based rate going forward. Several Board members expressed the view that a review by water/sewer department staff was warranted given the significant dollar difference, and the Board agreed to table the barn abatement pending that review.

The bills for the farm accounts are due June 11th. Robert Densmore noted that only interest (at 1%) — not a penalty — would accrue on late payments, and that any such interest could be abated alongside the underlying charges.

A separate set of Billings Farm accounts related to the Richard Billings house (69 Old River Road) and the powerhouse — accounts 04-03-20 and 04-03-20-001 — was presented. Both properties receive Town water but maintain their own private sewer systems with no connection to the municipal sewer plant.

Motion: by Gay Travers to abate sewer charges in the amounts of $1,841.39 on account 21-51-02-000 and $1,279.03 on account 21-51-02-008 (8: 44 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Motion: by Gay Travers to move the providing officer duties back to Chair Susan Ford (8: 57 AM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to table the sewer abatement for the Billings Farm dairy production facility (account 21-51-02-001) pending a review and recommendation from water/sewer department staff (8: 58 AM)
Seconded: by Gay Travers
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to abate sewer charges for accounts 04-03-20 and 04-03-20-001 (Richard Billings house and powerhouse at 69 Old River Road) (8: 59 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement – 2 Moore Place

Robert Densmore presented a request from Nelson Hitchcock on behalf of property owner Constance Hitchcock at 2 Moore Place. The property was connected to the municipal sewer system on November 14th of the billing cycle, having previously operated on a private septic system. Robert Densmore recommended prorating the sewer charge to reflect only the portion of the billing cycle during which the property was connected. He also noted the need to separately verify whether a sewer connection fee had been collected at the time of connection.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve a prorated sewer abatement for 2 Moore Place as recommended by Finance Director Robert Densmore (9:03 AM)
Seconded: by Gay Travers
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement – 23 The Green

Robert Densmore explained that the water charges for this account had previously been abated at the May 5th meeting to reflect usage of 4,988 cubic feet. The prior abatement motion had referenced water only, and this request sought to have the sewer charges adjusted to match the same corrected usage figure.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the sewer abatement for 23 The Green to match the previously approved water abatement (9:05 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement – 20 Heritage Condos Way

Robert Densmore explained that sewer charges had been erroneously billed to the main condo association accounts (31-01-27-001, 002, and 003), when in fact individual unit owners had been paying sewer separately for years. This resulted in a double billing on the part of the Town.

Motion: by Gay Travers to abate the sewer charges from the main association accounts at 20 Heritage Cottage Way as a Town billing error (9:07 AM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement – 27 Slayton Terrace

Similar to the 23 The Green abatement, the water charges for this account had been abated at the May 5th meeting to reflect 4,700 cubic feet of usage, and this request sought to have sewer charges adjusted to match.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the sewer abatement for 27 Slayton Terrace to match the previously approved water abatement of 4,700 cubic feet (9:08 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer and Water Abatement – 4 The Green

Robert Densmore presented a request from the property owner at 4 The Green to reduce the number of sewer and water connections from five to one or two, reflecting a change in the building's use from multiple apartments and a business to primarily rentable office space on the lower floors, with one remaining apartment on the upper floor.
The Board expressed uncertainty about how to handle the request consistently relative to other multi-use properties in Town. Board members noted that the request differed from a typical abatement in that it involved a structural change to how the building is used, and that consistency with the billing treatment of other similar properties was important. Robert Densmore indicated he would contact the property owner to request their attendance at the next meeting to clarify the building's current configuration and intended use.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to table the sewer and water abatement for 4 The Green pending further information from the property owner (9:18 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer and Water Abatement – 542 West Woodstock Road

Steve Fulkerson appeared before the Board to clarify that the request was not for a refund, but rather a correction to the billing structure going forward. Robert Densmore explained that the property at 542 West Woodstock Road (and associated address 540 West Woodstock Road) has a single water feed serving a main house and multiple rental units, but the billing did not accurately reflected the actual meter configuration. The corrections included: adjusting account 30-22-0.06-002 from a double to a single sewer rate (reflecting a single current tenant), and consolidating water meter usage onto the main account (30-22-0.06) to reflect the single feed, with metered sewer usage applied accordingly.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the billing corrections for 542 West Woodstock Road as requested and recommended by Finance Director Robert Densmore (9:24 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer & Water Abatement – 31 Elm Street

Robert Densmore explained that this property had a history of self-reported card readings rather than physical meter reads, and that the previous billing system had used an incorrect baseline reading. The correction sought to adjust the usage to reflect the actual card-reported readings: a starting reading of 321,788 and a current reading of 340,421, resulting in a corrected total usage of 18,633 cubic feet for both water and sewer.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the sewer and water abatement for 31 Elm Street (9:28 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer and Water Abatement – 6 & 8 River Street

Robert Densmore presented a request from property owners Suzanne and Doug Lochner to split usage charges 50/50 between the main house and an apartment unit. He explained that the current billing practice charges the full usage to the primary account and a minimum sewer charge to the secondary unit — a practice that has been consistently applied to similar properties. Robert Densmore recommended denial of the abatement on the grounds that the billing was consistent with established Town practice, as both units are occupied and each appropriately receives a minimum sewer connection charge.

Motion: by Dick Sweeney to deny the sewer and water abatement for 6 & 8 River Street (9:31 AM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Sewer and Water Abatement – Ranch Camp

Nate Freund, co-owner of Ranch Camp at 431 Woodstock Road, appeared before the Board to explain the circumstances of the abatement request. The property was purchased in April 2025 and renovated from a former bank building into a restaurant, opening in September 2025. When the February billing cycle bill arrived, it reflected approximately 65,000 cubic feet of usage — a figure that appeared to include consumption from well before the current ownership.

Robert Densmore explained that no physical meter read had been taken at the time of the property's sale closing (an error on the part of the prior attorney), and additionally, the scheduled Town meter read in June 2025 was skipped because the building was noted as being under construction. Robert Densmore and staff conducted a two-month spot-check read and estimated that Ranch Camp's actual usage during the period of operation was between 30,000 and 35,000 cubic feet. Mr. Freund noted that his comparable restaurant in Stowe uses approximately 20,000–30,000 cubic feet over a similar period, and agreed that 30,000 was a reasonable estimate given the slower winter months in which the sample was taken.

Motion: by Dick Sweeney approve the sewer and water abatement for Ranch Camp, adjusting usage to 30,000 cubic feet as recommended by Finance Director Robert (9:40 AM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

458 Woodstock Road – Request for Water Connection Deferral 1:06:35

Charlie Rattigan, Project Director for the Max Cummin Center for the Performing Arts, appeared before the Board along with civil engineer Brad Ruderman and hydrogeologist Cliff Harper. Mr. Rattigan described an exciting project to transform the 4.5-acre formerly commercial parcel at 458 Woodstock Road into a performing arts center, with an initial phase focused on environmental remediation of historical petroleum contamination, removal of old asphalt and concrete, and preservation of historic stone materials from a demolished 1834 structure.

Mr. Ruderman explained that while the project team would ideally connect to the municipal water system, current system pressure and flow rates are insufficient for both the potable water and fire suppression demands of the facility. Pursuant to Section 3 of the Municipal Water Use Ordinance, the team formally requested a deferral to permit the use of an engineered on-site drilled well and storage system. The property historically had its own drilled well, which has since been abandoned. The team is in the process of applying to the state for a source permit.

The Board noted its ongoing efforts to improve the municipal water system and expressed a desire that the project connect to Town water when feasible. The Board approved a deferral with the assumption — noted in the motion — that the project intends to connect to the municipal water system for potable use once adequate supply is available.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the water connection deferral for 458 Woodstock Road, with the assumption that the applicant intends to connect to the municipal water system when it is capable of supplying the property's needs (9:51 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Request to Harvest Trees along Town's Right of Way

Eric Duffy reported that, following questions raised at the prior meeting, he had consulted with Tucker Westenfield, who confirmed that there would be no erosion issues associated with the proposed tree harvesting. The contractor is required to follow Vermont VELAMP standards for water quality and erosion control. No new trees would be planted, though natural regeneration is expected over time.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to grant the request to harvest trees along the Town's right of way (9:53 AM)

Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Village Conservancy Process

Wendy Spector appeared on behalf of the Village Conservancy. She clarified that, under the existing letter of agreement between the Conservancy and the Town, all project-related communication flows through the Municipal Manager, and any interaction with other staff requires board approval. The Conservancy requested two actions from the Board.

First, the Board considered authorizing the Conservancy to work with municipal staff to conduct public feedback sessions on the question of whether the Village Green should be rehabilitated. Gay Travers raised a concern that holding such sessions at Town Hall could imply Town endorsement of the project, rather than a neutral inquiry. The Board also briefly discussed a question raised by Gay Travers regarding ownership of the Village Green, and Eric Duffy confirmed that based on his research the Town holds title to the Green.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to authorize the Conservancy to work with municipal staff to conduct public feedback sessions on the question of rehabilitation of the Village Green (10:05 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

The Board considered endorsing the Conservancy's planning initiative for a bicentennial celebration of the Village Green, including authorizing a working group to proceed with stakeholder coordination and sponsorship outreach. Ms. Spector clarified that this initiative is distinct from the rehabilitation question and would be funded through the Conservancy, not through taxpayer money. She noted that the precise bicentennial date is still being researched.

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the Conservancy's bicentennial celebration planning initiative for the Village Green (10:08 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

D. Liquor Licenses

Oakes & Evelyn, LLC – 1st & 3rd Class

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to approve the first and third class liquor license for Oakes & Evelyn, LLC, based on the assumption that the state is reviewing the application (10:09 AM)
Seconded: by Dick Sweeney
Vote: 4-0-0, passed

E. Discussion

Vondell-Cobb Update

Chair Susan Ford reported that the Town had received a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board in the amount of $655,000 (approximately $50,000 of which would go to the land trust to administer). The Board has not yet accepted the grant, having previously stated it did not wish to proceed with conservation unless private fundraising reached $400,000.

Tom Debevoise provided a fundraising update, reporting that commitments to date total $210,500 — just over half of the private fundraising goal. Notable gifts include $75,000 from the Byrne Foundation and $100,000 from the family of Nancy Winters. He expressed cautious optimism that additional five-figure gifts were forthcoming and noted that the fundraising window extends to the end of July.

Peter Shoemaker raised the question of how the raised funds would be used — whether to reduce the tax burden on residents, lower water bills, or support other needs such as affordable housing — and urged the Board to publicly articulate a plan for the use of proceeds.

Gay Travers expressed concern about the pace of the conservation process, noting that the Town had owned the property for barely a year and that the original rationale presented to voters was to maintain control over the parcel. Chair Susan Ford clarified that under the proposed arrangement, the Town would retain ownership of the land but would convey a conservation easement and development rights, with one portion of the property exempted. She acknowledged that the specific terms of the easement — including protections for water supply use and mountain bike trails — had not yet been negotiated, and that the grant documents would need to be carefully reviewed before any acceptance.

Selectboard Rules and Procedures for Meetings

The Board briefly discussed the ongoing effort to develop formal meeting rules and procedures. Given the recent addition of two new Board members (Dick Sweeney and Gay Travers), it was agreed that the existing draft materials should be shared with them to allow time for review. The general direction of the effort — balancing transparency and public input with the need to conduct business efficiently — was affirmed, but no vote was taken. The discussion will continue at a future meeting with input from VLCT.

Summer Meeting Schedule

The Board reviewed and confirmed the following summer meeting schedule:

- June 16 at 6:00 PM (evening meeting)
- July 7 at 8:30 AM
- July 27 (Monday) at 6:00 PM — substituted for July 21 due to a conflict
- August 4 at 8:30 AM
- August 18 (pending)

Homestead Filing Penalty

Town Assessor Kathy Avellino described the process for enforcing the homestead filing penalty that the Board had previously voted to adopt. The state processes homestead filings and is still catching up on its download schedule. Once the state confirms it is current, the Assessors will compare homestead filers against last year's non-homestead list and report suspected non-filers to the state, which then contacts the property owners directly. Those who file late will have a penalty added as a line item on their August or September tax bill.

Kathy Avellino noted that a cross-reference with the voter checklist has also been employed as an additional verification tool. She emphasized that enforcement of prior-year filing inaccuracies is the state's responsibility, not the Town's. The Board was advised to direct any concerns from the public to the Assessors office so that cases can be formally reported to the state.

AARP Grant Agreement

Eric Duffy reported that Economic Development Director Abbie Sherman had successfully applied for and received an AARP grant in the amount of $13,500. The funds will be used to install resting spots along Pleasant Street to support walkability for older residents traveling between East End and the Village center. The grant was noted for the record as required under the Town's grant policy.

Noise Ordinance for the Town

Former Town Planner Michael Brands appeared before the Board to request consideration of a noise ordinance, specifically focused on the keeping of roosters within the Town. He described a situation in which a neighboring property keeps at least one rooster, which crows beginning around 5:20–5:30 AM daily and continues throughout the day. He reported measuring 65 decibels from his bedroom window. He noted that the Village noise ordinance addresses animal noise nuisances but that no equivalent provision exists in the Town ordinance.

Mr. Brands proposed draft language modeled after the Town's dog control ordinance that would prohibit the keeping of roosters within 1,000 feet of a neighboring residence or business, with enforcement provisions to be determined by the Board. He stated he had warned the neighbor that he was bringing the matter to the Board.

Kathy Avellino, who lives nearby, corroborated that the rooster noise is audible from her property as well, and noted that she and the Town Clerk had been unable to locate older documentation of a similar Village-era prohibition.

Byron Kelly noted that the relevant state statute (Title 13, Section 1022) addresses noise in the nighttime — defined as the period from sunset to sunrise — and that there is no current mechanism to address daytime animal noise absent a local ordinance.

The Board agreed that additional public input and a draft ordinance were warranted, and directed Eric Duffy to prepare draft language for the June 16th evening meeting. No vote was taken on the ordinance itself, and Board members acknowledged the process would take several months including public hearings.

Change of Sewer Listing after Parcels Sold

Chair Susan Ford raised the issue of sewer billing not being updated when properties change ownership, resulting in potential under-billing for new occupants and increased costs to remaining ratepayers. She proposed that when a property sells, the billing automatically revert to the family rate, requiring new owners to request a reduction if warranted.

The Board discussed an alternative approach suggested previously by Peter Shoemaker: including a billing status verification card with each sewer bill, placed on notice that inaccurate reporting could result in a penalty. The Board agreed that the card approach was a reasonable first step that would not require a formal vote — it would be implemented as a process change. A penalty for inaccurate reporting would require a future vote, likely as an amendment to the sewer ordinance.

Merger Committee

Eric Duffy reported that he had reached out to John Spector, chair of the Finance Committee, regarding the committee's capacity to support future merger committee financial work. He indicated that four current members are willing to remain, which would leave approximately three vacancies on a seven-person committee.

Manager's Report

Water System Improvements: The previous day, he, Stephanie Appelfeller, and the Town's engineering firm (MSK) met with the Agency of Natural Resources in Montpelier to brief them on the permitting requirements anticipated for the water system upgrade project. The meeting was described as positive, with the state expressing willingness to work collaboratively on permit solutions.

Town Hall Camera System: Eric Duffy previewed a forthcoming agenda item regarding a security camera and access control system for Town Hall. The proposed system would include two cameras, an intercom, and a key-fob access system at the front entrance, along with electronic locks on interior doors at the top of the stairs and by the elevator. The system would allow for remote lockdown or access management. The anticipated cost is $27,000 for a three-year contract, followed by approximately $2,000 per year thereafter. Full details, including the RFP process, will be presented at the June 16th meeting.

G. Discussion Proposed Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313

Motion: by Cliff Johnson to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) to go into executive discussion executive session to discuss the possibility of the Town negotiating or securing real estate or lease options. (11:05 AM)

Seconded: by Dick Sweeney

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Motion: by Gay Travers to exit executive Session (11:12 AM)
Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

K. Approval of Minutes

The Board determined that approval of the minutes should be tabled until Vice Chair Norm Frates Jr is present, as the two newest Board members were not in attendance at the meetings in question and a sufficient number of eligible voters to approve the minutes was therefore not available. It was noted that future minutes should reflect attendance counts, including the number of participants on Zoom.

L. Adjournment

Motion: by Gay Travers to adjourn the meeting (11:14 AM)

Seconded: by Cliff Johnson

Vote: 4-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar

Susan B Ford

Richard Sweeney

Cliff Johnson

Signature: Susan B. Ford
Susan B. Ford (Jun 18, 2026 16:30:05 EDT)
Email: sford@townofwoodstock.org

Signature: Gay Travers
Gay Travers (Jul 20, 2026 14:49:16 EDT)
Email: gtravers@townofwoodstock.org

Signature: Richard Sweeney
Richard Sweeney (Jun 23, 2026 15:00:09 EDT)
Email: rsweeney@townofwoodstock.org

Signature: Cliff Johnson
Cliff Johnson (Jun 19, 2026 07:24:54 EDT)
Email: cjohnson@townofwoodstock.org