

**Village of Woodstock
Board of Trustees Meeting
July 14th, 2026
6:30 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn, Chair Lisa Lawlor, Brenda Blakeman, Stephen Stuntz, Jamie Fox

Staff: Eric Duffy, Kitty Mears Koar, Interim Police Chief Chris O’Keeffe

Public: Christopher Sparks, Nicholas Seldon, Wendy Marrinan, Beth Robinson, Norm Frates Jr., MaryBeth Defalco, Byron Kelly, Alison Taylor, Sarit Werner, Tom Ayres, William Ladd, Eliza Tarlow, Jim Otranto, Deborah Gravel, Dennis Shillen, George Frank Young, Rick Gaspar, Gary Smith, Frank Horneck, David Ormiston, Barbara Otranto, Eliza Laffin, Chris Floreani, Robert Acabbo, Bruce McClelland, Steve Sharma, Andrés Rangel, Lisa Pervise

A. Call to order

Chair Lisa Lawlor called July 14th, 2026, Village Trustees meeting to order at 6:30PM.

B. Additions and Deletions

Discussion item regarding the potential closure of the Middle Bridge during foliage season

C. Citizens' Comments

Christopher Sparks raised a question regarding ongoing utility work on Elm Street and inquired when it would be resolved. Chair Lisa Lawlor noted that Eric Duffy would address the matter during his report.

Nicholas Seldon made a series of allegations regarding financial misappropriation and personal conduct directed at members of the Board and administration.

D. Reports

Manager's Report

Elm Street Water Project: An engineering firm and a separate firm for environmental assessments were selected by the Selectboard approximately two months prior. Both firms are actively working to submit required information to the State for approval. Work is still anticipated to occur in the fall, largely at night to minimize disruption to residents and visitors. An update is expected within 30 days.

Public Works: Public Works Director Greg Fullerton is temporarily out following a health matter and is expected to return soon. Everett Chamberlain and David Green are sharing responsibilities in the interim.

Dispatch Staffing: Two dispatchers, Beth Therrien and Doug Perkins, are departing the department. Eric Duffy acknowledged their combined nearly 40 years of service. One letter of acceptance for a new hire has been received, and a second position is posted. Efforts are ongoing to reach full staffing as soon as possible.

Grant Award: The Village received a \$30,000 grant for a design study for a water retention pond in the Vondell Cobb area to address stormwater runoff. The intent is to apply for a \$100,000 construction grant next year. Eric Duffy recognized staff member Molly Maxham for her work in securing this grant.

Utility Bills: Water and sewer bills covering the most recent three-month period have been issued, with a due date of August 13th. Eric Duffy reminded the public that payment must be received by that date, not postmarked.

Manager's Absence: Eric Duffy noted he would be on vacation for the next several days, with Fire Chief David Green will serve as Acting Manager in his absence.

Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn asked about the fire risk on Mt Peg and the Short-Term Rentals registration.

Financial Report

The fiscal year has concluded, with the first payroll of the new fiscal year having been processed. Final reconciliation for May and June remains outstanding, and additional revenues are expected to be posted.

At minimum, \$44,773.32 is to be transferred out of expenses into capital reserves. Following that transfer, the Village is projected to end the year approximately at breakeven — with a small surplus or deficit possible depending on final billing and revenue reconciliation. A more complete update is anticipated at the August meeting.

The Trustees raised questions regarding the Short-Term Rental registration revenue, which remains approximately \$4,000 short of reconciliation, and noted the importance of following up on unregistered properties. Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn raised a question regarding Building Maintenance, which showed figures matching the budget precisely; Eric Duffy explained this is the result of journal entries allocating shared costs such as propane and electricity to the Police Department based on budgeted amounts. Alison Taylor raised a question regarding the Police Revenue lines, specifically miscellaneous revenue and Police contract revenue.

Chair Lisa Lawlor called for a 5-minute recess at 6:48 PM to maintain order following a disruption from a citizen.

Chair Lisa Lawlor noted the Village Trustees are back from a recess at 6:53PM

E. Potential Executive Session V.S.A. § 313

Motion: By Chair Lisa Lawlor moved to find that premature public knowledge of discussion of pending litigation, attorney client communications will place the Village Trustees at a substantial disadvantage, including by potentially waiving attorney client privilege and disclosing confidential information. (6:53 PM)

Seconded: Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Motion: By Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn under 1 V.S.A 313 (a)(1)(E),(F) moved to enter executive session for attorney client communications in discussion of pending litigation and to invite lead counsel, the Municipal Manager to join us. (6:54 PM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Motion: by Chair Lisa Lawlor to exit executive Session (7:16 PM)

Seconded: Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

F. Reports

Police Report

Interim Police Chief Chris O’Keeffe provided the following June statistics:

- Fines written at approximately \$3,000 (slightly below May, attributed to three event-heavy weekends requiring increased patrol presence).
- Parking tickets Issued: 545.
- Total calls: 200 in the Village, 135 in the Town, and 12 in South Woodstock.

The department is actively exploring grant opportunities related to communications equipment, including radios and phones.

Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn noted that moving violations revenue remains well below budget at the end of June but observed an upward trend in recent months.

G. Votes

Central Street Banner – Zack's Place – Turkey Trot

Beth Robinson of Zack's Place appeared before the Board to clarify three separate permit-related requests: (1) a banner for Zack's Place's Turkey Trot, (2) a Turkey Trot parade permit, and (3) a potential request regarding the newer large banner for the 20th anniversary above Central Street. It was clarified that the Turkey Trot banner paperwork and payment had already been processed administratively and did not require Board action.

Parade Permit – Zack's Place – Turkey Trot

Ms. Robinson confirmed the Turkey Trot is in its 19th year and that no substantive changes to the event are planned. The Board noted that an updated Certificate of Insurance (COI) is required prior to the event, as the current policy period has not yet been renewed. The Board also indicated that coordination with the Interim Police Chief regarding logistics would be handled separately.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to approve the Zack's Place Turkey Trot parade permit as presented, pending receipt of an updated Certificate of Insurance prior to the event (7:23 PM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Ms. Robinson also raised the question of a future request for the large Village banner format for the 20th anniversary. Given that she had not yet confirmed a vendor to install the banner, it was agreed she would return in August with that request once her arrangements are confirmed.

Twin Pines – East End Parking Request for Mellishwood Residents

The Board discussed a request from Twin Pines/Mellishwood for dedicated parking spaces for residents during the construction completion period, proposed from April through October. David Ormiston (Twin Pines representative) indicated that while the sooner a solution could be confirmed the better, the organization could work with the Board for another month if needed.

Discussion focused on two alternative locations: East End Park and Pleasant Street. Concerns were raised about East End Park conflicting with the Friday night summer concert series. Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn suggested that Pleasant Street, particularly a currently unmarked stretch near Mellishwood, may offer a viable alternative. Interim Police Chief Chris O'Keeffe noted some concern about emergency vehicle access and sight lines. It was also observed that neighboring businesses and property owners along Pleasant Street had not yet been consulted, and that any dedicated spaces would require an enforcement mechanism to ensure use by Mellishwood residents only. Additionally, it was noted that approximately three previously marked parking spaces behind the salon area had been lost and could potentially be reclaimed. No vote was taken. The Board directed Eric Duffy to research parking options on Pleasant Street and at East End Park, consider enforcement mechanisms, and return with a recommendation at the August meeting.

Easement for 33 Central

Eric Duffy provided background, noting the Board had agreed to the easement approximately one year prior. Legal and procedural matters have caused delays. The property owners Eliza Laffin and Will Ladd submitted a letter, included in the meeting packet, confirming their contractor has been directed to maintain a clean and efficient work site.

The Trustees requested a commitment that construction would not occur during foliage season. The property owners agreed to make their best effort to avoid the last week of September and the first three weeks of October, subject to contractor scheduling and ground conditions. The work itself is expected to take only a couple of days once underway.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to accept the easement for 33 Central as presented (7:36PM)

Seconded: Chair Lisa Lawlor

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Eric Duffy noted the easement document will be available for signature at the Town Clerk's office.

H. Discussion

Increase Bear Presence in Village – Presentation from Vermont Fish and Wildlife 42:07

The Board received a presentation from Vermont State Game Warden Chris Floreani and USDA Wildlife Biologist Robert Acabbo, who together lead a human-bear conflict reduction program established as a partnership between USDA Wildlife Services and Vermont Fish and Wildlife beginning in fall 2024.

The presenters outlined a significant increase in bear incidents across Vermont in recent years, peaking at approximately 1,800 reports in 2021 or 2022, with approximately 1,500 reports annually. The program was developed in part to reduce the workload on Fish and Wildlife wardens and biologists, who receive all reports submitted through Vermont Fish and Wildlife's online reporting portal.

Reporting: The public was urged to submit bear incident reports through the Vermont Fish and Wildlife website rather than calling individual officers directly. Submissions are received by program staff, the bear biologist, and the warden simultaneously, enabling faster and more coordinated responses.

Key Attractants Identified:

- **Garbage** (comprising approximately 50% of reported incidents) was identified as the primary attractant. Recommended mitigations include storing trash in a secured building until morning of pickup, using ammonia-soaked rags as a deterrent, and utilizing bear-proof or all-metal containers. It was noted that Casella Waste is moving to mechanical arm pickup trucks, which may affect the ability of residents to use locking mechanisms on standard containers — a challenge the presenters acknowledged has no simple solution at the household level.
- **Bird feeders**, including hummingbird feeders, were described as a "gateway drug" for bears due to their high caloric value. Bird feeders should be removed from April 1st through late November — taking them in only at night is insufficient.
- **Compost** should not contain meat, dairy, or eggshells, and should maintain a three-to-one ratio of brown to green material.
- **Grills** should be burned off after each use, and grease pans cleaned regularly.
- **Pet food** should not be left outside.
- **Vehicles** should be locked, with no food, beverages, or scented products left inside.

Bear Behavior: The presenters emphasized that the underlying problem is human behavior, not bear behavior. Bears that become food-conditioned learn and teach their young to seek out human food sources, escalating from bird feeders to garbage to vehicles and building entry. The Village has not yet reached the level of home and vehicle entry incidents seen in areas like Stowe and the Mad River Valley, though the current trajectory is concerning.

Lisa Pervise asked about daytime bear sightings in the College Hill neighborhood, with Mr. Acabbo reporting 11 incidents in three to four weeks in that area alone, and another describing bears active at 4:30 PM and on the Fourth of July. Mr. Sharma also recounted that Casella had informed him that upcoming changes to mechanical pickup arms would prohibit locking garbage cans.

The presenters clarified that if a bear enters a home or vehicle, residents should call 911 rather than contacting the Warden directly. In such cases, the police may be authorized to euthanize the bear. Vermont does not practice trap-and-relocation for adult bears, as it is

ineffective. The Warden noted that deliberate feeding and repeated break-ins are the situations that most directly trigger enforcement action.

The Board directed staff to post the Vermont Fish and Wildlife bear incident reporting link and the living-with-black-bears resource page on the website. The USDA representative offered to share an educational outreach file with the Village for public distribution.

Hot Dog Food Truck/Stand on Green

Andrés Rangel presented on behalf of himself and his business partner Tom DiAngelo. The pair are seeking an opportunity to operate a small, family-run gourmet food trailer in or near the Village, with a focus on quality, locally minded offerings. The trailer is approximately 5 by 6 feet in size.

Mr. Rangel explained they are not seeking to compete with existing restaurants, but rather to fill a gap in food availability on days or during hours when local restaurants are at capacity — particularly Mondays during peak season and in the mid-afternoon window between approximately 3:00 and 5:00 PM.

Discussion centered on possible locations. The Green was discussed but Trustees expressed reservations about placing an additional food vendor there. The applicant noted a potential arrangement with Sante Restaurant on Mondays, where the trailer could be positioned on the restaurant's property. The History Center parking area and other privately-operated locations were also suggested, including participation in Friday night concerts at East End Park in coordination with Pentangle Productions.

Eric Duffy clarified the standard process: the applicant must apply for a permit through the police station and pay for any parking spaces utilized.

As the item had not been formally warned as a vote, the Board took no action. Eric Duffy recommended the applicant continue to research suitable locations and coordination with private property owners and return in August with more information for a formal decision.

Elisa Tarlow expressed support for the concept but urged that any placement remain on private land rather than on the Green and encouraged participation in the farmers market and community events.

FY26 Halloween Discussion

Sarit Werner appeared before the Board to discuss the organization's capacity to support the Village's annual Halloween event. She also requested approval for PTO bake sales on the Green on October 4th and October 11th; she was directed to coordinate those dates with the Administrative Assistant.

On Halloween, Eric Duffy provided historical context: the event involves purchasing approximately \$3,000 in bulk candy (split between the Village and the Town at approximately \$1,500 each), organizing the candy into bags, and delivering them to residences on the closed streets — High Street, Golf Avenue, and Maple Street — with police and fire providing road closures. The effort has historically required substantial volunteer coordination and significant staff time.

The PTO indicated it cannot take the lead role this year. Ms. Werner noted she will be away in the two weeks prior to Halloween, though she offered to help recruit volunteers if the Town provides clear direction on what is needed and retains oversight of logistics, police coordination, and the address list. She emphasized that last year, complaints from residents were directed to PTO email addresses, causing confusion about organizational responsibility.

Ms. Werner added that the PTO can reliably help recruit volunteers but that a Town staff member needs to manage the operational details of the event. She also raised a broader policy question about whether concentrating Halloween activity on a few closed streets is sustainable, suggesting that allowing trick-or-treating throughout the Town could distribute traffic more

evenly and reduce the burden on residents of the affected streets.

The Board agreed to issue a public call for volunteers interested in forming a Halloween committee, and to explore outreach to youth service organizations such as the school's Interact Club. The road closure configuration — High Street, Golf Avenue, and Maple Street — was generally supported as a continuation of current practice. No formal vote was taken. Eric Duffy was directed to circulate a volunteer request ahead of the August meeting.

I. Potential Executive Session – Discuss FY27 Village/Town Police Contract

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to find a premature public knowledge in the discussion of the police contract including potentially waiving confidential information (9:05 PM)

Seconded: Stephan Stuntz

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E) and (F) to discuss the FY27 Village/Town Police Contract, and to invite the Municipal Manager to join (9:05 PM)

Seconded: Jamie Fox

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to Exit Executive Session (9:32 PM)

Seconded: Jamie Fox

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

J. Approval of Minutes

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to approve the minutes with the corrections (9:34 PM)

Seconded: Jamie Fox

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

K. Adjournment

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to adjourn the meeting at (9:34 AM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Respectfully submitted,
Kitty Mears Koar