Village of Woodstock
Board of Trustees Meeting
August 11th, 2026
5:00 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, Michelle Sutherland, Emily Collins, Robert Densmore, Savannah Spannaus, Abbie Sherman
Public: Bryan Kovalick, Tom Ayres, Tom Meyerhoff, Nicholas Seldon, Wendy Marrinan, Harry Falconer, Robert Pear, Scott Smith, Wendy Spector, David Omiston, Thomas D'Angelo, Andrés Rangel, Gay Travers, Barbara Kennedy

A. Call to order

Chair Lisa Lawlor called August 11th, 2026 of the Village Trustees meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

B. Additions and Deletions

Finance Update

C. Citizens' Comments

- Wendy Marrinan raised a concern regarding the Board's vote on Act 181 Tier 1B designation.
- Gay Travers an outgoing Selectboard member, echoed Wendy Marrinan concerns, stating she had reviewed the meeting videos and confirmed that no special public meeting was held prior to the March vote.
- Nicholas Seldon directed pointed criticism at the Board regarding its oversight of Village management and the use of Town funds.
- Robert Pear also addressed the Board, reading directly from the approved February minutes confirming the Board's stated intention to hold a dedicated public meeting on Tier 1b before the end of March, and asked what had become of that commitment.

D. Reports

Manager's Report

- Sidewalk Sales were noted to be taking place this weekend, with encouragement for residents and visitors to support local businesses.
- Water and Sewer Bills were due this Thursday by 4:30 PM, with a reminder that payment must be physically received in the office, not merely postmarked.
- Water System Emergency: The main well had stopped functioning overnight, Eric Duffy reported that a temporary fix had been implemented and the pump was operational, with staff monitoring the situation continuously. Engineers had visited at 3:45 PM to work on a permanent solution. Eric Duffy acknowledged the dedication of staff, including AJ Wright, Butch Proctor, Greg Fullerton, and his crew, for their sustained response to the emergency.

Financial Report

- Year-End Surplus: A surplus of approximately $9,000 was reported, subject to minor adjustments over the following two weeks as late bills and reallocations are reviewed.
- Short-Term Rental Registrations: Budget had anticipated $25,000 in revenue; actual receipts through June 30 were approximately $12,900.
- Moving Violations Revenue: The fiscal year ended with $4,525 collected against a prior-

year budget of $35,000, a significant drop. Finance Director Robert Densmore clarified that this revenue is received quarterly from the State of Vermont, that the final quarter's payment (April–June) would be recognized in FY27 upon receipt, and that the FY27 budget has been conservatively set at $18,000 to better reflect actual trends.

- Parking Meter Revenue: A notable increase was explained by a change in accounting practice in FY26, whereby the gross revenue (including credit card processing fees, which are also recorded as an expense) is now recognized on the revenue line rather than only the net deposit. This change was a correction to prior practice.
- Uniform Services: A significant variance from budget in the police department was attributed to staff turnover, which required outfitting new officers with new uniforms, as existing stock did not fit the new hires.

Police Report

- July Statistics: $6,278 in fines issued; 554 parking tickets; 208 calls for service in the Village and 182 in the Town.
- August (Through 11 Days): $3,104 in fines; 61 calls for service in the Village and 41 in the Town.
- New Website: Interim Chief Chris O'Keeffe encouraged residents to visit the department's new web page, accessible through the Town of Woodstock website. A police log update is planned to be posted publicly every Tuesday.
- Ice Cream Social: A community ice cream social the prior week drew over 40 attendees.
- Body Worn Cameras: A grant application for over $50,000 for police body-worn and cruiser cameras remains pending.
- New Dispatch Staff: Interim Chief Chris O'Keeffe welcomed Rebecca Stearns as Chief Dispatcher (formerly of Hartford PD, with over 25 years of experience) and Nina Howland as Assistant Chief Dispatcher (formerly of the State of Vermont, with over 14 years of experience).
- Uniforms: In response to questions from the Finance Report discussion, the Interim Chief Chris O'Keeffe confirmed that outfitting a new officer with basic uniform items costs approximately $500–$600, noting that the department's existing stock did not accommodate the sizes needed by recently hired personnel.

G. Votes

Finance Committee Applicants

Eric Duffy explained that the Finance Committee had previously transitioned to project-based work and that the Board wished to reengage it on several upcoming priorities. Four current members expressed continued interest in serving. The committee can have up to seven members.

Motion: by Brenda Blakeman to reappoint Todd Erceg, Karim Houry, Ellen LeFever and Jon Spector to the finance committee (5:28 PM)

Seconded: Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn
Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Setting of FY27 Village Tax Rate

- Finance Director Robert Densmore presented the FY27 Village tax rate calculation.
- Overall budget increased by 10.56% from FY26 to FY27
- Increased revenue projections of approximately 11% and growth in assessed property values resulted in a net tax rate increase of 9.18%—coming in below the budgeted increase.

- The tax rate was set at $274.80 per $100,000 of assessed value, up from $251.70 in FY26.
- Two primary drivers of the increase were salary adjustments (for the police contract under negotiation) and the reclassification of vehicle lease payments from capital reserves to the operating budget, together accounting for approximately 8.6% of the 9.18% total increase.
- Tax bills are expected to be mailed by early September, with the first installment due on November 6, 2026, and the second due the first Friday of May 2027.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to accept the FY27 Village Tax Rate as presented (5:34 PM)
Seconded: Brenda Blakeman
Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Woodstock Scoops – Sidewalk Permit

Scott Smith of Woodstock Scoops appeared before the Board to request renewal of his annual sidewalk permit for outdoor line management and crowd control on the sidewalk from September 18 through October 25, consistent with prior years. He confirmed that adequate pedestrian clearance of at least three feet is maintained and that the arrangement had functioned well in previous seasons.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to approve the Woodstock Scoops sidewalk permit as presented (5:36 PM)
Seconded: Brenda Blakeman
Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Triple Crown Throwdown – Parade Permit

Stephen Stuntz, a volunteer from the WAMBA organization appeared on behalf of the Triple Crown Throwdown event, a mountain bike race utilizing three trail areas (Mount Peg, Ascutney, and the Aqueduct). The event is in its second year and transits Town roads between trail segments without competitive advantage, drawing approximately 500 local organization members and generating economic activity for Village businesses. No substantive changes from the prior year's approved event were noted.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to approve the Triple Crown Throwdown permit as presented (5:39 PM)
Seconded: Jamie Fox
Vote: 4-0-1 passed

Appointment Trustee of Public Funds Applicant

Eric Duffy introduced Mark Harris as an applicant for the Trustee of Public Funds, noting that Mr. Harris was unable to attend in person due to a prior obligation but had submitted his application. The Trustee of Public Funds oversees funds held outside the general budget, such as the Rockefeller Fund. Mr. Harris was noted to have relevant financial experience through his involvement with the WAMBA organization and his work on the conservation easement for the Vondell Cobb fundraising effort.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to appoint Mark Harris as Trustee of Public Funds (5:41 PM)
Seconded: Jamie Fox
Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Appointment of STR Officer – Savannah Spannaus

Savannah Spannaus, Administrative Assistant for the Community Development and Planning team, and Emily Collins, Village Zoning Administrator, appeared before the Board to present the proposed appointment. The Board was informed that Ms. Spannaus would be taking on short-term rental (STR) enforcement responsibilities, including managing registrations and compliance. Ms. Collins noted that the transition would be a collaborative process and that site visits, while infrequent, would be conducted jointly as needed.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey to appoint Savannah Spannaus as STR Officer for the Village of Woodstock (5:44 PM)

Seconded: Jamie Fox

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Mellishwood Parking Spots Request

- Eric Duffy presented his recommendation that the Board approve dedicated parking spaces for Mellishwood residents in the East End parking area, rather than on Pleasant Street
- This location would be easier to monitor, enforce, and manage. He recommended five to six spaces, with signage designating the area for Mellishwood residents and a corresponding parking permit system.
- David Omiston from Mellishwood confirmed that six spaces would provide a meaningful benefit to residents during the construction period, and noted that discussions with nearby property owners had yielded limited additional options.
- The spaces discussed were those at the western end of the East End parking area.
- Enforcement would follow existing parking enforcement protocols. The monthly rate proposed was $150 per space, and the permit period would run approximately April 1 through October 1, 2027, avoiding winter plowing conflicts.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to approve six parking spaces at the western end of the East End parking area for Mellishwood residents at $150 per month per space, from approximately April 1 through October 1, 2027 (5:50 PM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Village Conservancy Presentation

Wendy Spector of the Village Conservancy provided two updates and a request for a vote.

Update 1 – Green Design Session: The previously approved public session on design and functional elements of the green was held the prior Thursday, with 30 participants. The session confirmed the Conservancy's design priorities, and next steps will involve refining design options to present to the Board.

Update 2 – Conservancy Corps: The Conservancy introduced a proposed volunteer maintenance initiative called the "Conservancy Corps," which would coordinate volunteer maintenance work on the Green between April and October in conjunction with DPW. The Conservancy was seeking permission to work with DPW staff to develop a plan for the following spring, with any formal approval to come back before the Board in time for implementation.

Vote Request – Infrastructure Initiative: The Conservancy requested Board authorization to explore irrigation and stormwater management options for the Green. The proposal involves investigating whether rainwater collection could be integrated with an irrigation system to reduce stormwater runoff and limit reliance on the municipal water supply. This would require outreach to VTrans and the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission.

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn to authorize the Village Conservancy to work with relevant government agencies, including VTrans and the Regional Commission, to explore irrigation and stormwater management options for the Green (5:56 PM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman
Vote: 5-0-0 passed

H. Discussion

Hot Dog Truck

- Thomas D'Angelo and Andrés Rangel appeared before the Board to present their proposal for a small food truck operation in the Village.
- Both are employed at local restaurants and describe the truck as less than half a parking space in length and fully self-contained. They noted the truck was parked outside Town Hall during the meeting for the Board's viewing.
- They proposed using the green area near the Welcome Center on Mechanic Street as their primary location, operating Wednesday through Monday from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM, from approximately September through November 1 of this year.
- Potential locations discussed included the lot across from Ace Hardware.
- The Board expressed general support for the Welcome Center location. Eric Duffy noted that the Welcome Center property is owned by the Village and leased to the Town, and that he would need to review the lease terms to determine which body has authority to approve the arrangement. The Board indicated a favorable disposition and directed Eric Duffy to confirm the proper approval pathway and return with a formal vote. The Board noted the particular benefit of a food option on weekends and Mondays during foliage season, given recent restaurant closures.

Note: The discussion was briefly interrupted by a significant disturbance in the meeting room involving a resident. A short recess was called before the meeting resumed.

Village By-Law Updates

- Harry Falconer of the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission, serving as Shared Energy Coordinator for Woodstock under contract, presented an overview of the draft Village Zoning Bylaw revisions prepared by the Planning Commission.

Summary of Major Changes: The primary impetus for the bylaw revision was to bring the Village into compliance with the Home Act (Act 47 of 2023), which preempted certain local zoning provisions to encourage housing production in areas with public water and sewer access. Key changes include:

- Allowing a minimum density of five units per acre in areas with water and sewer service.
- Permitting multifamily housing of up to four units with water and sewer service areas.
- Transitioning residential uses in core areas from conditional use review to site plan review.
- Adding subdivision standards, which were notably absent from the existing bylaw, establishing requirements for lot access, utilities, sidewalks, and the treatment of public infrastructure in new subdivisions.
- Modernizing design review standards to include an expedited administrative review process for minor projects, reducing the burden on the Design Review Board for smaller-scale applications.

Relationship with Act 250 and Act 181: Mr. Falconer clarified two ways in which the bylaw changes intersect with Act 250:

1. Tier 1B: Having subdivision standards is a prerequisite for Tier 1B designation under Act 181, which provides permanent Act 250 exemptions for residential development of up to 50 units in eligible areas. Mr. Falconer emphasized that the decision to opt into Tier 1B is entirely separate from zoning and rests with the Board as the legislative body.
2. 1-Acre vs. 10-Acre Municipality: Under Act 250, a municipality with valid subdivision regulations becomes a "10-acre Town," meaning only commercial developments on parcels of 10 acres or more would require Act 250 review, compared to the current 1-acre threshold. Mr. Falconer noted the Board has the option to adopt an ordinance to retain the 1-acre threshold if desired.

Additional Recommendation: Mr. Falconer noted an oversight in the draft: the bylaw as written requires all units of a multifamily development to be in a single building. He recommended adding language to allow multiple principal structures on a single parcel for multifamily use, which would enable Village-scale development patterns without requiring a variance. He offered to draft this language for the Board's consideration before the public hearing.

Hearing Process: Mr. Falconer outlined the adoption procedure: the Board may review and redline the draft, and once a public hearing is warned (minimum 15 days in advance), the draft is locked. Substantive changes after the hearing require an additional hearing. The Board must hold its hearing within 30 to 120 days of receiving the draft (received July 23, 2026).

- The Board expressed a strong interest in holding robust public input sessions before taking any action. Several members acknowledged that the March 2026 vote on Tier 1B status had occurred without the public input session that had been committed to in February.
- The Board directed Eric Duffy to research the implications of rescinding or reconsidering the March Tier 1B vote and to present findings at a future Special meeting.
- The Board agreed that separate meetings should be held—one dedicated to Tier 1B status under Act 181, and others focused on the zoning bylaw draft itself. Chair Lisa Lawlor requested that a clear, labeled map of the Village identifying zoning districts, streets, ridgelines, floodplains, and water infrastructure be provided for the public hearing.
- Gay Travers shared her experience attending Planning Commission hearings on this draft, expressing concern that public comments raised at those hearings were not meaningfully addressed in subsequent commission meetings. This concern was noted by the Board as further justification for ensuring thorough public engagement.
- Robert Pear raised specific questions about the mobile home provisions and the shift from a 1-acre to a 10-acre Act 250 municipality, requesting that the 1-acre designation be retained. The Board acknowledged these as exactly the types of issues to be addressed at the forthcoming public hearing.

No votes were taken. The Board agreed to schedule a special meeting dedicated to Tier 1b discussion and to plan a separate public hearing on the zoning bylaw draft.

Middle Bridge Closure During Foliage

Abbie Sherman Economic Development Director presented a suggestion to temporarily close the Middle Bridge to vehicle traffic during peak foliage season—approximately the last weekend of September through Indigenous Peoples' Day—to allow tourists to photograph and enjoy the covered bridge without competing with vehicle traffic. She noted the idea had been discussed with the Marketing Committee, which responded favorably.

Board members expressed mixed views. Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn stated a clear preference for keeping the bridge open to vehicles, citing the needs of locals and the already congested nature of the Village during foliage. Jamie Fox indicated a willingness to hear a full presentation from the Marketing Committee before forming a final opinion. The Board agreed to invite the Marketing Committee to present a comprehensive proposal at a future meeting, noting that sufficient lead time. Public input was also identified as an important component before any decision.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn approve the minutes of 07.14.26 (6:54 PM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

J. Adjournment

Motion: by Vice Chair Jeffrey Kahn adjourn the meeting (6:54 PM)

Seconded: Brenda Blakeman

Vote: 5-0-0 passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar