

The January 11, 2023, meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 5:00 p.m. by First Selectman Beth Heller via WebEx. The meeting may be viewed on youtube by clicking on the following links: Part 1: <https://youtu.be/1gR8T3hYMaY> Part 2: <https://youtu.be/1ZHx8Saei7s>

Present: First Selectman Beth Heller; Deputy First Selectman Sheila McCreven; Selectmen Joseph Crisco, Paul Kuriakose, Dr. David Lober, David Vogel.

Present for Staff: Anthony Genovese, Administrative Officer/Director of Finance; Town Counsel Gerald Weiner; Assistant Administrative Officer Karen Crosby; Media Specialist Pua Ford; and Clerk Geraldine Shaw.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS

"This is our first Board of Selectmen meeting of 2023 -- Happy and Healthy New Year wishes to you all!

Thank you for continuing to keep each other safe with on-going COVID-19, flu, and RSV challenges and for understanding why we moved THIS meeting to a remote format. New Haven County is now color-coded in the red, for High Community Spread. The CDC recommends (and I concur) staying up to date on vaccines and wearing masks indoors in public spaces, which can help prevent or reduce severe illness and lower the potential for strain on the healthcare system. Woodbridge Human Services, in partnership with Griffin Hospital and the DPH mobile van, will hold an all-ages COVID vaccine clinic for children 6 months to seniors on January 31 from 1-6pm in the Center Gymnasium. No appointments are necessary. Masks are available for town residents through the Human Services Department, as are a limited supply of COVID-19 home test kits. You may call that department to arrange pick-up.

The holiday season is now behind us, and we have moved fully into budget season. Please remember that all residents have a voice in the budget process. We have just received the 6-year Capital Budget improvement presentations from all departments and will be moving ahead with Operating Budget presentations later this month.

The annual budget reflects our shared values and is a balancing act of our commitment to provide excellent education for our youngest residents and yet show respect to taxpayers by carefully budgeting for responsible spending on services.

All residents are strongly encouraged to attend these upcoming meetings at the end of January, to understand the process. Meetings can be watched live on YouTube and our local Channel 79. Links to watch recorded meetings can be found in meeting minutes.

One way in which we are working toward our stronger financial future is by getting our municipal waste costs under control. Our current contract runs through 2024 and it is estimated that when our contract is due to be renewed, prices may rise.

We are working to divert waste in preparation of these increases. The Town is encouraging residents to think twice before they throw. That is because the Town of Woodbridge, like many towns across Connecticut, faces steadily rising disposal costs. The heavier our trash, the more we pay. The Town installed a scale at the Transfer Station to accurately assess the weight of the trash collected by commercial haulers and resulting fees to be collected. The scale is also used to determine standard per pound rate for residents disposing of bulky trash items such as furniture or demolition materials.

Single Stream recycling has been problematic as placing all materials into a single bin can increase the likelihood of contamination due to broken glass and the propensity to toss non-approved material into the recycling bin. The container so that residents and haulers may dispose of glass for recycling separately.

Glass to be recycled (non-redeemable bottles only) must be clean with lids removed. Any glass or other containers that are contaminated with food cannot be recycled; these items should be included with regular trash.

Unacceptable items will contaminate the entire load, and will either be rejected or cost the town in contamination fees. You can find a full list of acceptable and unacceptable recycling at the Town's website.

With the Operating Budget presentations just ahead for us, I am pleased to say that budget season no longer coincides with election season. Legislation was enacted by the state last year moving those few towns with May elections to November to coincide with the rest of the state. Woodbridge's municipal election will take place on November 7, 2023.

I have been focusing on funding quality of life improvements without increasing the taxpayer burden. With more than 3 million dollars in grant funding secured in the past year, we look to take projects from the proposal stages to completion. These projects include renovation of the Old Firehouse into the Community and Cultural Center, Construction to renovate the Woodbridge Center, and sidewalks to link Amity High School to the Library and other Town buildings.

Please try to attend the presentation on the proposed Community and Cultural Center at the library at 7 pm on January 25. Residents are encouraged to attend to learn more about the proposed plan, ask questions, and provide feedback.

The Woodbridge Center's renovation project is well on its way to completion. When finished, it will be a modern, fresh, welcoming, air-conditioned space with excellent ventilation. This project is the result of years of planning and will help our seniors remain healthy and active – which of course – is a critical goal for our aging population. When finished we will have a space worthy of the wonderful programming that happens inside.

Another part of the upgrade to the center of town will be the addition of a sidewalk connecting Amity High School with the Library to make access safer. This will be entirely funded through a Department of Transportation grant.

These three projects have moved the needle on our Town Center Campus beautification plan which includes a more beautiful, inviting, welcoming, safe, pedestrian friendly space. Remaining projects in the beautification plan include additional outdoor seating, upgraded signage, and improvements to the Center gymnasium and renovation of the Center Building. We continue to seek both Federal and state funding to accomplish these projects.

2023 promises to be another busy, productive, and prosperous year in Woodbridge. I look forward to it and I look forward to working with all of you to make it so.

One final reminder to the Board – our February meeting is on the 8th, which is the second Wednesday.”

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Vonda Tencza

Superintendent Tencza said that as a follow-up to the Building Committee November walk-through of Beecher Road School, members of the Boards of Selectmen, Finance, and Education will be invited to tour the property.

1. Ms. Tencza has been meeting with various community and education groups to establish a working relationship. She said if anyone was interested in meeting with her, they should contact her assistant, Marsha Degennaro.
2. Enrollment - 863
3. Met with State Legislators and other area educators to discuss state mandates and the impact on town and board of education budgets.

CENTER BUILDING RENOVATION COMMITTEE

Dwight Rowland, Chair of the Center Building Renovation Committee gave an update on the Committee’s activities since June 1, 2022. Following interviews of the respondents to the RFQ for Architectural/Engineering services the Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that Silver Petrucelli + Associates be retained for these services associated with the Center Building Renovation Project.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Kuriakose) to enter into a contract acknowledging Silver Petrucelli + Associates as the Architect of Record for the Center Building Renovations – Phases I – V.

Mr. Rowland said that the Committee also recommended that the Town enter into a separate agreement with Silver Petrucelli + Associates for A/E services related to the STEAP Grant for the Center Gym Renovations.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Crisco) to enter into a separate agreement with Silver Petrucelli + Associates in the amount of \$27,250 for A/E services related to the STEAP Grant (Center Gym Renovation)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE’S REPORT

Monthly Report – Mr. Genovese reported that as of December 31, 2022, he is estimating a year-end budget surplus of \$400,000. Because the current Town budget includes an allocation from fund balance of \$400,000, there will be no change to the fund balance at the end of the year. Fund balance at June 30, 2023, is estimated to be \$7.58M or 14.00% of annual expenses. He noted that the Town received \$23,456 in opioid settlement funds and that due to two failed referenda, the Town will contribute \$134,046 less to Amity in fiscal year 2023 than budgeted.

FUNDING REQUESTS

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED** to recommend the following funding requests to the Board of Finance:

2223-16 – Interdepartmental Transfer Amount: \$4,225.85

To: Town Clerk – Election Supplies (1125-00/55113)

From: Revenue – Grants (1-2-1100/42600)

For: Transfer Election Grant Funds to the Town Clerk Election Supply line item

(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously approved

2223-17 – Allocation Amount: \$58,000
To: Fire Comm. – Repair & Maint/Machine (1230-00/53510)
From: Board of Finance – Contingency (1170-00/56800)
For: Unforeseen and unanticipated repairs to apparatus
MODIFIED – The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Crisco – McCreven)
To recommend a modified amount of \$30,000

2223-18 – Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$27,250
To: CNR-Center Building (302-1900-57500/CTGYM)
From: CNR – Prior Year Purchase Orders (302-46500)
For: Architectural/Engineering Services to renovate the Center Gym
(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously approved

The Board agreed to wait on The Center Building Renovation Committee’s request for \$55,000 until later in the winter season when more is known about the health of the Contingency Fund.

POOL FINANCIALS

Mr. Genovese shared that the estimated total cost for operating the pool for one year is \$232,61 - covered by four different budgets: Pool & Gym, Recreation, Employee Benefits, and Board of Education. The average annual pool related income is \$55,000.

The Board agreed to defer any decision on repairs to the pool to the February 8th Selectmen’s meeting.

BID AWARD – 457 PLAN

Mr. Genovese explained the 457 plan that is offered to all full-time employees. The current providers are Voya, Nationwide, and AIG. With the assistance of Fiducient Advisors the Town issued an RFP to seek better pricing and improved plan design.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Lober) pursuant to the recommendation of the Fiducient Advisors to approve Empower as the sole provider of a 457 plan for the Town of Woodbridge employees.

GASOLINE AND DIESEL RATES

Mr. Genovese said that the BOWA regional purchasing cooperative locked into \$2.6680 for gasoline and \$3.0744 for diesel.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Daniel Del Prete, 11 Maple Vale Drive – is requesting more information re the funding for the Center Building renovation work. He also supports the importance of the Beecher pool in the community and asks if there is grant or COVID money that can be allocated to the repairs.

Bob Hill, 68 Acorn Hill Road – questioned the process for choosing an architect for the Center Building. He also spoke of the importance of services against the offset of income from those services. As to the number of Beecher pool memberships – he said one membership may involve several family members. He also noted that there is the multi-person membership of the Woodbridge Aquatic Club,

and the swim lessons, both Beecher and recreation, that includes 800 – 900 children – and is a very important, life-saving program.

Charles (Chuck) Pyne, 162 Center Road – urged the First Selectman to return to in-person meetings. He noted that oft-times the Town’s website does not work for virtual meetings. Mr. Pyne also noted that as far as the move to a November general election for Town officials – it was not mandated by the State. The Town officials had an opportunity to retain the May election, and the Board chose not to.

Town campus beautification – Mr. Pyne said that the efforts to beautify the Town’s campus will cost the tax payers more and more money over time. He suggested expanding on the plan to watch the Town purse-strings/budget and less on beautification.

Kate Rozen, 1087 Johnson Road – submitted an e-mail for public comments. Ms. Rozen called the Board’s attention to the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and grant program, “Safe Streets for All”. She urged the Board to consider the opportunity to participate in a regional 2023 application through SCRCOG. Funds from this program can pay for sidewalks and road diets which slow down traffic, to increase vibrancy in the business district and safe roads for walkers and bicyclists.

SPERRY PARK COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. McCreven said that the Committee approved the Sperry Park survey that Sophia McDermott, a U-Conn student, has posted as part of her student project. Ms. McDermott will report the results of the survey at the Board’s March 8th meeting.

CENTER GYM – ADOPT DECD RESOLUTION OF AUTHORIZATION

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Lober) to waive the reading of, and adopt the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION of AUTHORIZATION TO FILE AN APPLICATION TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT for
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CENTER BUILDING GYMNASIUM, ITS AIR HANDLING SYSTEM, AND
RENOVATION AND MODERNIZATION OF THE ADJACENT PUBLIC AND HANDICAPPED LAVATORIES**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 4-66(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development is authorized to extend financial assistance for economic development projects: and

WHEREAS, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Town of Woodbridge make an application to the State of \$500,000 in order to undertake improvements to the Center building gymnasium, its air handling system and renovation and modernization of the adjacent public and handicapped lavatories, and to execute an Assistance Agreement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

1. That it is cognizant of the conditions and pre-requisites for the State finance assistance imposed by Section 4-6(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes

2. That the filing of an application for State financial assistance by the Town of Woodbridge in an amount not to exceed \$500,000 is hereby approved and that First Selectman Beth Heller is directed to execute and file such application with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required, to execute an Assistance Agreement with the State of Connecticut for State financial assistance if such an agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, decisions and revisions thereto, and to act as the authorized representative of the Town of Woodbridge.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were adopted/approved/acknowledged under the consent agenda.

- a. **Tax Refunds** – The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Crisco) to refund taxes in the amount of \$4,0972.59 pursuant to Section 12-124 thru 129 of the Connecticut General Statutes and the recommendation of the Tax Collector.
- b. **Town Clerk's Reports** - Acknowledged Receipt of the Town Clerk's Reports for the month of December 2022 and cumulative from July 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022.
- c. **Minutes** - Approved Minutes of December 14, 2022 (McCreven – Crisco)
- d. **Resignation** – Acknowledged Bruce Mandell's resignation from the Fire Commission term to 2025
- e. **Quarterly Reports** - Acknowledged receipt of quarterly reports from The Conservation Commission and The Human Services Commission
- f. **Greenway Plan** – It was the consensus of the Board of Selectmen to: remove from the Consent Agenda, receipt of the Conservation Commission's 2022 Greenway Plan and take it up as a separate item.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S 2022 GREENWAY PLAN

The Board of Selectmen **ACKNOWLEDGED** receipt of the Conservation Commission's 2022 Greenway Plan. It was the **CONSENSUS** of the Board to invite Conservation Commission Chair Tim Austin to attend a future Board of the Selectmen meeting to discuss the plan.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

Pursuant to the recommendation of the Personnel Committee the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Lober – Vogel) to offer Gaye Mastrianna the position of Payroll and Benefits Administrator beginning January 12, 2023, at the salary of \$72,000 per year.

TOWN COUNSEL'S REPORT

Code of Ordinances – re new ordinance proposed by Tax Collector: The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Lober) that the Town retain payments in excess of the amount due provided the amount of the excess payment is twenty-five (\$25.00) or less.

Code §75-5 – Boards and Commissions, Membership and Terms of Office – extending terms of office for Board and Commission members to December 31st of terms expiring in any given year beginning with the year 2023.

Public Hearing - The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) to hold a public hearing on the proposed changes to the Code of Ordinances, 6:30 p.m. at the February 8, 2023, meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Cell Tower, 118 Rimmon Road, Mr. Weiner reported that one neighbor is going forth with an action against the Siting Council's decision to approve the siting of the cell tower. The association is not participating, and the Town is not filing as an intervener.

GRANT DOCUMENTS FOR THE COMMUNITY & CULTURAL CENTER

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Kuriakose) to authorize the First Selectman to sign the State of CT \$2,000,000 Grant documents for the Community & Cultural Center.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:58 p.m., the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) to move into executive session for discussion of pending litigation pursuant to Section 1-200(6)(B) re: Open Communities Trust LLC et. al. vs. Woodbridge Town Plan & Zoning Commission et. al. – Report from Attorneys and to invite Mr. Weiner, Mr. Genovese, Atty. Peter Nolin, and Atty Tom Gerarde to attend.

At 8:49 p.m. the Board moved out of executive session and returned to the regular meeting. Ms. Heller stated that no motions were made, or votes taken in executive session.

No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Mr. Vogel, seconded by Ms. McCreven, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk