Link to view the March 9, 2022, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen
https://youtu.be/OYSFtjH9Hjc

The March 9, 2022, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 5:00 p.m. by First Selectman Beth Heller, via WebEx in accordance with SB2012.
Present via roll call: First Selectman Beth Heller; Deputy First Selectman Sheila McCraven, Joseph J. Crisco, Jr.; Paul Kuriakose; Dr. David Lober; and David Vogel.
Present for staff: Mr. Genovese, Administrative Officer/Director of Finance; Ms. Ford, Media Specialist; Mr. Weiner, Town Counsel; Ms. Yagla, Assistant Administrative Officer, and Mrs. Shaw, Clerk

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REMARKS
“Good evening. Like all of you I have been watching the unprovoked Russian invasion of the independent nation of Ukraine with horror and sadness. I haven written a proclamation, as many other town and city leaders have done, which I will read into the record at the end of my remarks. We cannot ignore this needless human suffering.

As I have been saying for the past few months, this year’s budget process has been extremely challenging. If all department, board and commission budget requests were granted for next fiscal year, our mil rate will be close to 50, which I know you all agree, is not sustainable.

Last year, the Board of Finance asked each department that this year’s budget requests should be developed with a goal of as close to a zero percent increase as reasonably possible. Currently, the Woodbridge Board of Education is requesting an approximately 9% increase which would require a major tax increase. There were no decisions made nor votes taken at last week’s Board of Finance meeting, and they will meet again on March 17. The Boards of Finance and Education are working together to find ways to lower that request without harming the quality of education.

Once again, I encourage residents to pay careful attention to the budget process and voice their opinions. The most effective way for you to share your opinion and/or ask questions is at the Monday, April 18 Preliminary Budget Hearing when the Board of Finance presents its proposed budget. Following this hearing the Board of Finance may make changes to its proposed budget which is then presented at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Our budget crisis is caused by a long-term revenue problem. If we do not grow our grand list soon, we will continue to face increasingly difficult budget decisions. New revenue is critical to fund our high-quality education and other important Town services. The Town could grow its grand list by expanding the commercial district and also offering new and diverse housing.

The 2030 Task Force, charged with growing our grand list, will soon refer a proposal to the Board of Selectmen to help with our business district. This will be on our agenda next month, and I am excited to learn more about it and how it could help us bring more vitality and more businesses to the area.
Simultaneously, the Housing Opportunity Study Committee just completed a survey of residents and tonight Chair Dominick Thomas will report to the Board of Selectmen with an update on their draft plan to diversify the Town’s housing options.

As a reminder, The State of Connecticut has established a benchmark which requires 10% of all housing in each municipality be affordable. Currently, only 1.18 percent of Woodbridge homes qualify. We must provide housing which is not exclusionary and also affordable.

The former Country Club of Woodbridge (CCW) property is the largest tract of developable land owned by the Town that also has sewer and public water access, which allows for more dense development under our revised zoning regulations. I remain committed to controlling the development of the property and letting voters decide this issue at a town-wide referendum.

We MUST act on our own, and avoid having development forced upon us through legal action. Tonight, we will further discuss negotiations with Arbor Haven regarding their proposal later in our meeting in Executive Session.

Betsy, Tony and I met earlier this month with resident Kent Golden who discussed his idea to put solar panels on the CCW property. We are exploring that option and how it could complement housing on the property. Additionally, Betsy and I recently met with resident Ingrid Harrison who presented an idea for developing the former CCW. Her ideas are in your packet, as well as another idea from resident Deke Hotchkiss. We also received another email on the subject yesterday from resident Brett Calistro.

Since our last Board of Selectmen meeting, Tony and I have met with Dr. Budd and WBOE Chair Lynn Piascyk for our monthly meeting and to discuss the Board of Education budget. Attorney Weiner, Tony, and I met with the Arbor Haven folks again to discuss their proposal and also make sure they have received the feedback received to date from residents, boards and commissions.

I joined the Strategic Plan subcommittee for their first meeting. They will be updating us later tonight. I met with Beth-Wood Baseball League president Dwight Rowland to receive and thank them for their annual donation to the Town. Following my monthly meeting with Police Chief Cappiello, Tony and I met with representatives from Eversource about their plan for further “vegetative management” on the land beneath their high-tension power lines. You will hear more about that from Betsy later tonight.

I also met with Amity Superintendent Dr Byars with FS Cofrancesco and FS Zeoli for our monthly meeting. I attended the SCRCOG monthly meeting. I was fortunate to join the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion book discussion on the 1619 Project, where there were nearly 30 participants. It was a wonderful evening.

Thank you.

I will now read the “PROCLAMATION IN SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE.”
Whereas, following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the people of Ukraine, on December 1, 1991, voted overwhelmingly to affirm its status as an independent nation; and

Whereas, Russia’s continued attempts to control and re-subjugate the Ukrainian people have been consistently rejected by the nation; and

Whereas, Vladimir Putin, in the name of the Russian people, has invaded Ukraine without provocation and in violation of international law; and

Whereas, the invasion of Ukraine by this brutal authoritarian regime is a severe threat to the lives and well-being of tens of millions of Ukrainian civilians; and

Whereas, tens of thousands of Russians have risked their lives in protest and opposition to this invasion; and

Whereas, Russia’s Putin’s flagrant violation of state sovereignty poses a threat to all international institutions

Now therefore, be it resolved, that the Town of Woodbridge stands with the nation of Ukraine and in solidarity with all Ukrainians, living across the world and condemns the invasion of this sovereign nation, supports the full withdrawal of Russian troops, and the maintaining of the democratically elected government.

Signed at Woodbridge, Connecticut this ninth day of March 2022

WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Budd
Dr. Budd reported that after input from over 750 parents and staff, as of March 7, 2022, the Board of Education has instituted Mask Choice. He noted that 70% of students are fully vaccinated.
Dr. Budd read the following letter he sent to the Board of Finance regarding the proposed FY2023 budget:
“Please note that the Board of Education, as well as my office, values the strong partnership that has characterized the Board of Education and the Town of Woodbridge for decades. In that vein collaborative conversations continue regarding potential ways to maintain the excellence of Beecher Road School within a time of escalating student needs while respecting the needs of the Woodbridge taxpayers. (So there are competing needs, competing priorities but collaboratively we believe we can work together.) Our conversations continue to explore numerous possibilities.”
He further stated that the Board of Education is developing a fact sheet that will be sent to the Boards of Finance, Selectmen, and posted on the website.

PRESENTATION – 4-H GROUP – POLLINATOR PATHWAY
Leader Joi Prud‘Homme and Enrene VanTonder and members of the group presented a video explaining the importance of a pollinator pathway through Woodbridge connecting to other towns. They said they would appreciate a proclamation from the Board of Selectmen supporting the project.
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (McCreven – Vogel) to grant permission for the Woodbridge 4-H Group’s project to add Woodbridge to the Pollinator Pathway and to present a proclamation in support of the project on Earth Day, April 23, 2022.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Kuriakose: Economic Development Commission – working very hard to bring economic development to Woodbridge, such as – sponsorships for additional signage to attract people into Town and the business centers; holding events in the business district; and investigating use of ARPA funding.

Later in the meeting Mr. Vogel asked if the EDC referred to the “Plattus Report” as a source document. Ms. Yagla said that yes, and also the EDC section in the Town Plan and Zoning “2015 Plan of Development”. NOTE: The “Plattus Report was prepared in 2013 by the Yale Urban Design Workshop under the direction of Prof. Alan J. Plattus.

Amity Board of Education (“ABOE”) – though for many years prudent financial practice recommended that auditors be changed every five years, both the ABOE Finance Committee and the Woodbridge Board of Finance Chair recommend remaining with the current auditors. Mr. Genovese agreed that this practice is no longer required by the Government Finance Officers Association. Amity submitted an application to FEMA for $300,000 in COVID relief funds. Due to changing criteria ABOE may receive only $175,000, however some amount of funding is expected.

Mr. Crisco: Town Plan and Zoning Commission – met on March 7th – scheduled a public hearing on the Agricultural Commission’s request for a regulation change to allow farm stands to offer products other than produced on the property; issued a favorable 8-24 report re the plan to build a pavilion on the Massaro property; the Commission decided to conduct a survey re zoning regulations re recreational marijuana. The Commission approved retaining a consultant to review the current zoning regulations for technical errors.

Dr. Lober: Inland Wetlands Agency – the public hearing re the proposed development on Merritt is tabled until March awaiting a hydrological report. An application for a solar tracking apparatus on Seymour Road was tabled pending a site visit and soils report.

Conservation Commission – a presentation by the Land Trust was postponed to the March meeting. They are working on a “greenway” project. The goal is to encircle the Town with contiguous green space connecting to adjacent towns. The edge of the former Woodbridge Country Club should be included and protected. Other properties on their wish list to be connected include the following golf courses, Yale, Oak Lane, Homewood, and the Racebrook Tract. They are interested in applying for grants to make open space purchases; and contacting the Strategic Plan Committee regarding use of ARPA funds. The Commission will contact the Board of Selectmen re a tree ordinance to prevent clear cutting such as occurred on Northrop Road.

Human Services Commission – Youth Services – a program re problem gambling will be offered at the Amity Middle School. March 14th (π day) – there will be a pizza making party at the Middle School. Applications for the Youth Service Award close April 4th. Senior Center - is now open for in-person activities, with the exception of lunch. A life-style change and fitness program is offered. There will be a St. Patrick’s Day drive through lunch offer sponsored by Coachman Square and Holly Shanbrom Associates. The Center is seeking to hire a strength training instructor
and the driver’s position is still open. The Human Services’ budget has been reduced by $10,000 to help lower the mill rate. The Commission is concerned that these changes will result in an inability to of the Department to meet the needs of the citizens it serves and will impact staff vacation and illness benefits. The blood drive held in conjunction with the Nicole Donzello Foundation was very successful. Estimates for the planned renovation work exceed the budget for the project.

Ms. McCreven: The Woodbridge Board of Education (“WBOE”) met on February 28th at which she reported the Board of Selectmen’s action on February 23rd where the Selectmen recommended to the Board of Finance a $45,000 reduction to the WBOE’s proposed budget, which still represents an 8.2% increase from the present budget. She said she noted that overall, with the Board of Selectmen’s reductions, a very modest growth of the grand list and non-tax revenue to the Town would result in a mill rate of 44.95 which would be a 5.42% increase over the current year – so she stressed to the WBOE that if enacted it would be one of the higher mill rates in the State. She said that she told the WBOE that the Board of Selectmen strongly support PreK-12 education in Woodbridge and appreciate that the WBOE is carefully identifying Beecher’s needs and that the Board of Selectmen is looking forward to continuing to work collaboratively to ensure that a plan can be worked out to sustainably fund education budgets over the coming years.

Commission on the Use of Publicly Owned Property (“CUPOP”) – concerned about roadside trash and pollution as it affects public property. The Commission voted to request the Board of Selectmen consider a “No Littering” ordinance – this request will be presented later this evening. Ms. McCreven said that CUPOP also discussed the overall purpose of the Commission. Since the Commission was created by Ordinance, this will also be discussed later in the meeting.

Mr. Vogel: Library Commission – the library is well supported by the patrons and has received several gifts that support programs. The library is operating on its full 54-hour schedule as of January 17th, albeit with a reduced staff due to program reductions during COVID. Discussion continues re a plan to modify the circulation policy to eliminate fines for overdue material.

Recreation Commission – Mr. Vogel noted that the role of the Recreation Commission during COVID has been important to the Town’s mental well-being. Volley-Ball winter league and swimming lessons have resumed. The pool will be drained on March 19th to assess the extend of a small leak near the drain. Spring and summer programs are being planned. Mr. Rowland, President of the Beth-Wood Baseball League informed the Commission of the donation of $3,000 from the league to the Town in support of the program.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY STUDY-UPDATE, Dominick Thomas, Chair

Atty. Thomas, Chair of the Housing Opportunity Study Committee described the Committee’s work to complete and present to the Board of Selectmen a long-term housing opportunity plan to provide a mix of housing opportunities including compliance with federal and state law, that each municipality’s housing stock will be comprised of 10% affordable housing. The Committee is seeking ways to attract younger families due to the aging of the current population. With the help of staff member Kristine Sullivan, the Committee has reviewed Woodbridge’s infrastructure, land areas and housing plans from other municipalities. The Town participated in the South Central Regional Council of Government’s housing survey with the Woodbridge response rate
being the highest in correlation to population. The SCRCOG report is on the Town’s website. The Committee also worked closely with SCRCOG to develop a Woodbridge specific survey that ran on the Town’s website from February until March 4th. The results is also on the website. Atty. Thomas noted that the fourteen (14) pages of answers to an open-ended question re Woodbridge should b read by members of all boards and commissions. The Committee has scheduled an in-person public information meeting for March 30th.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE’S REPORT

Monthly Report – Mr. Genovese reported that he is estimating a year-end budget surplus of $664,570. As the budget includes an allocation from fund balance of $400,000, increase to fund balance at year end is projected to be $262,570 resulting in an estimated fund balance of $7.0M or 13.53% of annual expenses. He is also expecting a surplus in Intergovernmental Revenue of $433,903 due to non-budgeted FEMA reimbursement for storm Isaias, State PILOT funds, and cost sharing grant funds for special education.

FUNDING REQUESTS

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

#2122-09 – Interdepartmental Transfer

To: Parks Dept – Overtime (1520-00/50410) $1,500
    Parks Dept - Rentals (1520-00/53610) $1,500
From: Revenue – Donations (1-6-1100/46410)
For: Transfer donation from Beth-wood Fathers Baseball to the Parks Department budget lines.

(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously Approved

#2122-10 – Allocation

To: Town Plan & Zoning Commission Gen’l. Prof. Services (1180-00/52100)
From: Board of Finance Contingency (1170-00/56800)
For: Request is to fund a professional planner and/or attorney to assist TPZ to review and make updates and revisions as necessary to the Zoning Regulations.

(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously Approved

#2122-11 – Intradepartmental Transfer

To: Gov’t Access Television – Gen’l. Prof. Services (1135-00/52100)
From: Gov’t Access Television – Prof. Dev. Conference (1135-00/54610)
For: Fund shortage in budget line for production personnel.

(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously Approved

#2122-12 – Intradepartmental Transfer

To: Public Works Overtime Regular (1310-00/50410) $ 30,000
    Public Works Equip. Parts (1310-00/55140) $ 10,000
From: Public Works Highway Wages (1310-00/55140)
For: This request is to fund overtime due to winter storms and fallen trees on roads as
well as equipment parts due to higher than normal need this year.
(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously Approved

#2122-13 – Intradepartmental Transfer
    Amount: $ 5,000
    To: Public Works Sand, Salt & Materials (1310/00/55160)
    From: Public Works Road Maintenance (1310-00/55170)
    For: This request is to fund the purchase of additional treated salt for road treatment
(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously Approved

BULK PICK-UP CHARGES FOR INSTITUTIONS OF FAITH
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (McCreven – Vogel) to continue the practice of
waiving the collection of fees for disposal of bulky-waste from institutions of faith up to $200 for
the balance of this fiscal year and FY2023.

ADD ITEM TO AGENDA
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (McCreven – Lober) to add to the agenda the
required resolution for the Senior Center Restoration Grant.

GRANT RESOLUTION
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (McCreven – Crisco) to adopt the following
resolution:

RESOLVED: That First Selectman Beth Heller is authorized to enter into and amend contractual
instruments in the name and on behalf of the Town of Woodbridge and to affix the Corporate Seal
of the Town thereon concerning a Bond Commission approval on July 23, 2021, in the contract
amount of $300,000, the funds to be utilized to assist with the renovations of the Woodbridge
Senior Center, including the transformation of outdated space, access improvements, and
increased functionality. (Project #MHA213006MHASBC)

Mr. Weiner then added for the record that the transmittal letter “received from the State today
has a conflicting purpose for the plan. The first paragraph states exactly what I said (in the
resolution). The second paragraph says that the money to be used for the future use of the facility
can be used in a residential and outpatient facility for individuals with problems such as substance
abuse.” He stated that is clearly incorrect – and probably incorporated from another plan and
he wants everyone to know that the Town of Woodbridge is not using this money for substance
abuse. Mr. Genovese will make the correction with the State.

AMERICA RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS (“ARPA”)
In the Board’s packet is a listing of ARPA Next Steps and Proposed Timeline and project
suggestions. The listing coordinates with the Strategic Plan. Mr. Genovese informed the Board
that he has received the “final rule” from the U.S. Treasury outlining how funds can be used. New
to the list is “revenue replacement”, a significant update for Woodbridge. The Town has the
option for a onetime decision to either calculate the town’s revenue loss based on the provided
formula or elect a standard allowance. The decision must be made by April 30, 2022. Electing
the Standard Allowance would loosen up some of the restrictions on using the funds as it is
presumed $2.6M, was lost due to revenue loss and therefore the recipients are allowed to use that amount to fund government services (It has to be something that the government typically does and has historically done). Mr. Genovese recommends the standard allowance option as it gives the Town more flexibility to use the $2.6 million ARPA funds. He noted that there are still three restrictions: the funds cannot be added to the fund balance; you cannot supplant expenditures (use to purchase an already budgeted item); and for any long-term liabilities (such as a pension fund or to paydown debt).

Discussion of use of funds. It was agreed that the funds should be used for transformational projects such as economic development. Ms. Heller mentioned items that benefit the most residents – such as the HVAC system for the Center Building gym. Dr. Lober, that this is a good time to begin to implement some of the suggestions in the report from the Yale School of Urban Design (the “Plattus Report”) which laid out a plan to connect the various areas, making the commercial district into a village district – attracting both businesses and visitors. The report can be found on the Town’s website.

Ms. Heller and Ms. Yagla mentioned that the 2030 ad hoc Committee plan to the Board of Selectmen included a proposal from a New Haven Planner who is very familiar with the Plattus Report. Ms. McCreven spoke of flooding and parking issues in the area.

**BOARD ACTION ON ARPA FUNDS STANDARD ALLOWANCE**
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Vogel – Lober) to take the standard allowance option under revenue loss reimbursement.

**STRATEGIC PLAN – UPDATE – Ms. McCreven, Mr. Vogel (Strategic Plan Committee)**
In the packet this evening is a copy of the draft of the proposed strategic plan that the Committee prepared. Ms. McCreven said that the Committee has held three meetings. She requested that the Board of Selectmen review the draft and submit any questions prior to the Committee’s March 18th meeting. Mr. Vogel said that the Committee identified important core issues for the Town that can be expanded as the plan is developed. Ms. McCreven thanked Ms. Yagla and Mr. Genovese for their research and input.

**ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER’S REPORT – Ms. Yagla**
Eversource Vegetation Management – Ms. Heller said that she met with Eversource representatives to discuss their right-of-way vegetation management plan for the high-tension power lines. She said that she reminded the representatives of the many problems encountered when such work was undertaken in 2019 and asked that there be more communication and consideration for the residents during this project.

Ms. Yagla then shared the power point presented by Eversource. The plan is available on the Eversource website.

The Board agreed that Eversource representatives are to be invited to attend the April 13th Board of Selectmen Meeting.
Pay as you throw trash – Ms. Yagla explained that implementation of the pay as you throw trash program is postponed. She said that the towns that have implemented the program have town-wide collections. Woodbridge residents either hire a private hauler or take their household trash to the transfer station.

Solar panel installations – Ms. Yagla reported that the solar installations planned for the firehouse and the public works garage may not go forward due to possible incompatibility with the Microgrid.

**PERMISSION TO HOLD EVENTS ON TOWN PROPERTY**
The Board of Selectmen VOTED to grant permission to hold the following events on Town property:
Boy Scout Troop 907 – Annual garden/flower sale – Old Fire House Green – April 9, 16, 23, 2022
   (Heller – McCreven) Unanimous
Boy Scout Troop 907 – Troop picnic fun weekend – Town Center Green – Jun 18, 2022
   (McCreven - Lober) Unanimous
Beth-Wood Baseball League – Movie Night – Town Center Green – April 29, 2022
   (Heller – McCreven ) Unanimous

**REQUEST TO CONVENE THE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE**
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Vogel) to convene the Ordinance Committee to review a request from the Commission the Use of Publicly Owned Properties for a “No Littering” ordinance and to undertake a review of all Town Ordinances.

**TOWN PLAN & ZONING REPLY RE REQUEST FOR 8-24 REVIEW – MASSARO FARM PAVILION**
The Board VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – McCreven) to accept the favorable reply from the Town Plan and Zoning re the proposed pavilion on the Massaro Farm.

**TOWN COUNSEL’S REPORT – Attorney Gerald Weiner**
Mr. Weiner reported that he and the First Selectman met with Chris Sorensen, Chair of the Agricultural Commission re extending farm leases from one (1) year to five (5) years. However, this would be contrary to the Charter and potentially tie up Town owned property for several years. Mr. Sorensen suggested that if there was a grant a farmer wanted to apply for – that the Town apply for it as property owner. If required, the farmer would be responsible for any matching funds.
ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE TOWN CLERK’S REPORTS
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Kuriakose) to acknowledge receipt of
the Town Clerk’s Reports for the month ending February 28, 2022 and the cumulative report for
July 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022.

MINUTES
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (McCreven – Vogel) to approve the following
minutes as presented:
- Joint Boards of Selectmen & Finance – December 2, 2021 – Cap. Budget
- Joint Boards of Selectmen & Finance – December 7, 2022 – Cap. Budget
- Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting – February 9, 2022
- Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting – February 22, 2022 – Budget Recommendations

RESIGNATIONS:
The Board of Selectmen acknowledge with regret the following resignations:
- Michael Shanbrom – Police Commission
- Tobi Nwangwu – Economic Development Comm.
- Nancy Polk – Commission on the use of Publicly Owned Property
- Chris Sorensen – Town Plan & Zoning Alt.
- Todd Sasso – Commission on the use of Publicly Owned Property

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS
At 7:30 p.m., the Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Vogel) to move into executive
session pursuant to: 1) pursuant to CGS 1-200(6) (C) – Security Devices regarding dispatch – Selectmen
Paul Kuriakose; 2) pursuant to CGS 1-200(6) (D) – Discussion of Arbor Haven Proposal to purchase the
former Country Club of Woodbridge Property - and to invite Town Counsel Gerald Weiner and
Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese to attend.

At 8:11 p.m. the Board of Selectmen moved out of executive session. Ms. Heller stated that no motions
were made or votes taken in executive session.

ACTION ON ITEM DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (McCreven – Vogel) to take no action on the Arbor Haven
proposal for development of the former Country Club of Woodbridge property until the Board of
Selectmen receives the Housing Opportunity Study Report.

ADJOURNMENT
On a non-debatable motion by Ms. McCreven, seconded by Mr. Vogel, the meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m

Geraldine S. Shaw
Clerk