

<https://youtu.be/aHiV0gV1yJs> Link for Part 1 of the January 12, 2022, Board of Selectmen meeting

https://youtu.be/p_L_Pw8AYTA Link for Part 2 of the January 12, 2002, Board of Selectmen meeting

The January 12, 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 rollcall: First Selectman Beth Heller; Deputy First Selectman Sheila McCreven, 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. Absent: Mrs. Shaw, Clerk

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS

"Good evening. As you are certainly aware, the Connecticut daily positivity rate has soared into the mid 20's. In order to protect all Woodbridge residents and others who work, visit, shop and enjoy many of our activities in town, last week I signed an Emergency Order requiring everyone wear masks at all indoor establishments, workplaces and public meeting spaces. This became effective this past Monday, January 10. I have received several "thank you's" from businesses and residents. This order will remain in place until further notice. It is the right thing to do to keep the Town of Woodbridge safe. Masks, social distancing, vaccines and tests are the simple steps we need to continue to take to keep ourselves and our community safe. You may read the full order on the Town website.

Thank you to our Human Services Department staff, our Police Department members, and our all-volunteer members of our Fire Department for organizing and staffing two COVID-19 at-home test kit distribution events. I was able to help with the distribution on Saturday. This was a very well organized, efficient drive thru effort. Instead of the 1,100 test kits we were told to expect from the State, we received two smaller shipments. We held two events to give them out – last Monday and last Saturday. Both were incredibly cold days! On Saturday, we were also able to hand out N95 masks. The Town also shared N95 masks with staff at the Amity Regional School District, the Woodbridge School District, Ezra Academy, local Day Care Centers, and Town staff.

I would urge everyone to please take advantage of the widespread availability of FREE vaccines and boosters, especially given the quick spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. You may find vaccines and tests by visiting ct.gov/coronavirus. Masks continue to be required at all times in Town buildings, all town meetings remain virtual, and in-person programming has been scaled back significantly to help to continue to keep our community safe.

Our ad hoc appointed 2021 Housing Committee is working diligently on the Town's Affordable Housing Plan. I believe they will release a Woodbridge-specific survey to supplement the regional survey published by SCRCOG soon. We are also planning to offer a town public hearing at some point to listen to our residents' thoughts and ideas. Hopefully this plan will help us find ways to meet our state and federal mandated obligations regarding affordable housing.

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee is also working on a survey to better understand the experiences, concerns and priorities of residents. They plan to use the data gathered to prioritize their work. Tonight, I am appointing a new member to that committee – Ke Xu. Thanks to former First Selectman Ellen Scalettar and all the members of this most important committee for all their efforts.

As a reminder, the Board of Selectmen recently voted unanimously, that beginning on February 1st, a new fee system for bulk trash will begin. Bulk trash are large items such as furniture and construction demolition. The Town's Transfer Station has a scale which is used to charge haulers bringing in residential trash. Also on February 1st, the scale will be used for residents and contractors bringing in

bulk trash items. That fee will be \$0.10 per pound. As a reminder, cash is not accepted at the Transfer Station.

This modified fee is one way for the Town to prepare for a difficult fiscal future by shifting the cost of the service to those who use it rather than have all residents subsidize it. Currently the Town charges \$20/cubic yard, but the Town is charged by the ton, to dispose of trash. In fiscal year 2021, the Town collected \$4,511 in bulk trash fees but paid out \$69,490 to haul and dispose of bulk trash. The new fee will help to offset the Town's costs. Additionally, the Town will continue to offer bulk trash pickup five months a year by appointment, but with a fee. Starting on February 1st there will be a \$50 per appointment fee. That fee will partially cover the Town's cost to run this program, including staff time and disposal costs. This evening, we will learn more about a program the state is promoting called "Pay As You Throw." This is another way for us to reduce trash-related expenses and also hopefully reduce the amount of trash generated in our Town.

We have many important items on our agenda this evening so in the interest of time, I will stop here. Welcome to the new year. Let's all keep safe. Thank you".

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Budd

Dr. Budd briefed the Board on the status of Covid-19 at Beecher Road School.

There has been an increase of positive cases in both students and staff. Per State mandate all school sessions are in person. All contact guidelines are being followed and notifications made. Over 50% of the students have received the covid-19 vaccinations and over 99.5% of the staff. About 130 students are participating in a state program to provide free weekly testing to families that elect that option. He said that the school is very grateful for the masks provided by the Town and test kits supplied by the State. Beecher families should contact the school to obtain kits.

Current operating budget/proposed budget for 2022-23 – savings continue to be found in current operations – reducing the projected year end deficit. Dr. Budd said that if approved by the Board of Education he will present a revised proposed 2022-23 operating budget to the Boards of Finance and Selectmen.

Proposed tour - It was agreed that the Board members will tour the school building and grounds once the weather improves.

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION – Chris Sorensen, Steve Munno

Request to waive Town Plan and Zoning application fees - The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) to waive the Town Plan and Zoning application fee(s) for the Agricultural Commission's application to revise the Zoning Regulation regarding farm stands.

Follow-up on request for mechanism to extend length of farmland leases – Attorney Weiner reminded the Board that the Charter requires that any purchase, sale, or lease in excess of one year, of property valued at \$50,000 or more is subject to approval by Town Meeting. Steve Munno explained that the farmers that hold one-year leases on Town property cannot apply for grants to improve the property as one of the qualifications for eligibility is having control of the property for a minimum of five years. He said that this has been an issue for years and he was disappointed that the approval letters for the 2022 growing season were still for only one year. Mr. Weiner suggested that each request be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Kristyna Hulland said she holds a lease on 160 Pease Road and a portion of 52 Center Road. She wants to apply for a grant to eradicate the invasives on the property. The grant she wants to apply for is due this Friday and there is no time to go to a Town Meeting to extend her lease. Ms. McCreven suggested that the Town may be able to apply as a partner.

Kristyna Hulland, Off Center Farm – The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Heller) to request Town Counsel to investigate the option of the Town working with Ms. Hulland to apply for the Farmland Restoration Grant.

PAY AS YOU THROW TRASH – Kristen Brown of Waste Zero, Chris Nelson of DEEP

Chris Nelson, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection/Sustainable Materials Management provided introductory remarks. He said that Connecticut has long relied on aging Waste to Energy facilities to process its trash. Several of these plants are beginning to have repair issues; a large plant in Central CT is closing, all of which leaves the State with capacity issues. The CT DEEP is encouraging programs that divert as much material as possible from disposal. Grants are available to Towns to explore methods of waste reduction. Two methods supported by DEEP are “Pay as you Throw”, and a food waste diversion program.

Kristine Brown of Waste Zero is working with the State and Towns to establish waste reduction programs.

Woodbridge is one of the municipalities that has moved to the second tier in the grant application process. Ms. Brown explained the waste crisis in Connecticut and the country, the lack of disposal sites and facilities, and the rising cost of disposal. Stonington CT has instituted the Pay as you Throw program and has reduced per capita waste generation by 1/2. She showed graphs of the results of the successful program in other states.

Next Steps – as mentioned before, Woodbridge is in the second tier of the grant process

Over the next couple of weeks, Ms. Brown will work with staff to develop some potential pilot pathway/projects for the Town. Prior to March 30th staff will gather feedback regarding the proposed projects. If positive, Woodbridge will then apply for round two of the grant.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Vogel: - no report as he was traveling when the committee met.

Ms. McCreven – The Woodbridge Board of Education Finance Committee will recommend to the Board a reduction of \$575,000 to the original \$17.6 million 2022/23 proposed budget, resulting in a proposed increase of 9.9% instead of the original 13.5%.

Commission on the use of Publicly Owned Properties – no December meeting.

Dr. Lober: Inland Wetlands Agency – received application for proposed duplex homes on 3.2 acres that spans the flood plain and the flood plain review area on Merritt Avenue.

Conservation Commission - voted to send to the Board of Selectmen, with no changes, the November 18, 2022, memo rejecting the Arbor Haven proposal. The Commission’s proposed 2022/23 budget reflects \$2,000 to hire someone to take minutes and \$400 to purchase badges and/or other related costs associated with the Trail Challenge program, and \$200 for boot brushes to clean boot before entering and leaving trails to control Jumping Worms – a new invasive species that destroys the soil. The Commission will conduct a site visit on January 22 to the proposed Merritt Avenue development.

The Commission is considering requesting a possible 10% open space set-a-side for the development with a connection to the West River Trail.

Human Services Commission – held a special meeting on December 20th to discuss the proposed budget. The operating budget, net of grants and donations totaling \$361,000, will come in at \$11,392 less than last year’s budget. The distribution of Covid test kits was successful; still seeking to hiring a driver; budgeted \$35,000 to replace the aging sedan (originally a police cruiser) – a sedan is needed to access the parkway; acknowledged donations of holiday baskets, toys, gift cards, and thanked Samantha Woodruff for organizing the paint-party fundraiser.

Youth Services – now has a website; an internet safety program has been organized for January 31st.

Mr. Kuriakose: Amity Board of Education – not able to attend.

Mr. Crisco: Fire Commission special meeting on January 3rd – dispatch matters were discussed in executive session. Covid cases are on the rise, the Fire House is on lock-down and cleaning has been increased. The department is retaining the 10-day quarantine protocol. The Chief noted that Woodbridge received only 600 test kits instead of the 1,000 scheduled. The proposed 2022-23 operating budget was approved as presented. The department is moving forward with the order for Engine 9. Complaints re the siren were discussed and the Chief explained why it was needed and that there can be no modifications. Fire Marshal Joseph Cappucci had 62 appointments since the last meeting. Letters were received from the Orange Fire Department thanking Woodbridge for mutual aid.

Police Commission – met on December 20, 2021. Conditional offer of employment as a police officer was extended to Stefano Mauriello. The Increase in traffic and accidents on Litchfield Turnpike was discussed. The Commission approved grant applications for the Click-it or Ticket program and the Violent Crime Prevention program. The Stuff a Cruiser and Shop with a Cop holiday programs were very successful. Testing for the Sargent position was approved. Letters of commendation were awarded several officers.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no members of the public present who wished to make public comments. Ms. Heller read into the record e-mails from the following residents: Marie Luciano, Gregory Karwowski, Lillian Topf, Joseph & Gloria Porco, Penelope Sampoli, Hui-Jia Dong.

Copies of these comments are entered as public comments and attached to these minutes for the record.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY GRANT – Mr. Genovese, Ms. Yagla

Mr. Genovese said that last year the Town applied for a Community Connectivity Grant which included sidewalk and biking improvements for the Town Center. He said that the State is holding another round, considering applications from last year – and Woodbridge’s is included. Ms. Yagla explained that some of the improvements listed in the original grant were accomplished through a crowd funding campaign and a matching grant from Sustainable CT. This coming grant includes the original sidewalk on the western side of Newton Road to connect the high school to the library, change the asphalt walk in front of the library to concrete, move it closer to the road, and install much needed lighting for people attending evening programs. There is also a plan to install a small sidewalk in front of the Town Hall connecting the walk from the parking lot across the lawn to the Town Hall entrance and/or the cross walk to the other side of Meetinghouse Lane. Currently people and students are walking in the road at both locations - which is a significant safety issue.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE'S REPORT

Monthly Report - Mr. Genovese reported that as of December 31, 2021, he is projecting a year-end budget surplus of \$323,343. Because the current Town budget includes an allocation from fund balance of \$400,000, decrease to fund balance at year end is projected to be \$76,657. Fund balance at June 30, 2022, is estimated to be \$6.6M or 12.88% of annual expenses.

FUNDING REQUESTS

#2122-05 – Allocation Amount: \$10,600.00

To: Fire Dept Part Time Maintenance (1230-00/50330)

From: Board of Finance Contingency (1170-00/56800)

For: Continuation of more frequent cleaning of the Fire House due to COVID-19

(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously Approved

#2122-06 -Interdepartmental Transfer Amount: \$75,664.00

To: Woodbridge Board of Education (1910-00)

From: Revenue – Tuition Revenue (1-6-1910/46800)

For: Transfer payment from the Stratford Board of Education for student-specific costs

(Heller – McCreven) Unanimously Approved

STRATEGIC PLAN – DISCUSSION – Mr. Genovese, Ms. Yagla

Ms. Yagla said that of the various Strategic Plans she has researched, the two she finds most useful are Enfield and Tolland. Several of Enfield's goals match those of Woodbridge. The plan is divided into "buckets" each with a mission statement and initiatives or goals. However, the plan does not identify the department or group that is in charge of each bucket.

Tolland's strategic plan is included in its operating and capital budget. The plan outlines six goals and lists the department in charge of each goal.

The Board members will review each plan, e-mail any suggestions to Ms. Yagla, who will continue to work on a model for Woodbridge.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING – update – Ms. Yagla, Mr. Genovese

Mr. Genovese said the Town has received ½ of the \$2.6 Million allotted to Woodbridge. The balance will be received in June 2022. The U.S. Treasury has released the final ruling re allowable expenditures. He said that ruling is more flexible on the replacement of lost revenue. Once the lost revenue is reimbursed, the revenue can be used for an allowable government expense, an expense the Town would normally fund. Mr. Genovese said that he is seeking more clarification on the statement and once he has that clarified work can move forward on involving the public in the choice of projects to be funded.

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Community Council is planning an Earth Day celebration for Saturday, April 23, 2022. There will be more details at a future meeting. The Council is also planning a bike event in May to celebrate the Town's new bike route. The 2030 Task Force is waiting on a proposal from a consultant to do a planning study of the business district. This would coincide with a sidewalk and bike study of the same area and that study is funded through a Department of Transportation grant. The plan is to have these two projects go forward in tandem and be funded by the Federal Infrastructure Funding.

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF TOWN CLERK'S REPORTS

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller - Crisco) to acknowledge receipt of the Town Clerk's Reports for the month ending December 31, 2021 and cumulative from July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

MINUTES

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller - Crisco) to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2021, Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting.

APPOINTMENT – Inland Wetlands

The Board of Selectmen received nominations to fill the vacancy of a voting member on the Inland Wetland Agency for a term ending June 30, 2025.

Ms. McCreven nominated Steven Sosensky who currently serves as an Alternate on the Inland Wetland Agency. Mr. Crisco seconded the nomination.

Mr. Vogel nominated Nick Zito and listed his qualifications: he is a professional in the field - a Forester with the Regional Water Authority, holds a degree in Natural Resource Management and a certification in wetlands delineation. Mr. Vogel noted that Mr. Sosensky, though now registered as "Un-affiliated", was a registered Democrat. Mr. Vogel said that appointing Mr. Zito would bring a professional to the Agency as well as balance the membership. Dr. Lober seconded the nomination.

VOTE: Steven Sosensky – Aye – Heller, Crisco, Kuriakose, McCreven
Nay – Lober, Vogel

Ms. Heller declared the position filled.

TOWN COUNSEL'S REPORT

Mr. Weiner said he would be reporting in executive session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Kuriakose) to move into executive session to discuss the items listed below and to invite Marianne DuBuque to attend for items a. and b.; further to invite Mr. Weiner and Mr. Genevese to attend for items a. thru e.

- a. CGS 1-200(6)(D) Discussion of Arbor Haven proposal to purchase former Country Club of Woodbridge property;
- b. CGS 1-200(6)(D) Discussion of Offer from Woodbridge Land Trust/Woodbridge Park Association for conservation easement at former Country Club of Woodbridge;
- c. CGS 1-200(6)(D) Discussion of offer from Peter LaTronica to purchase 31 Enoch Drive;
- d. CGS 1-200(6)(B), 210 (b)(4) – Strategy and negotiations re Cell Tower Siting Council decision @ 118 Newton Road (pending litigation);
- e. CGS 1-200(6)(C)-Security devices re Dispatch issues- Update – Paul Kuriakose

ACTION AS APPROPRIATE ON ANY OF THE ITEMS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

When the Board came out of executive session, Ms. Heller stated that no motions were made, or votes taken in executive session.

Item 16a. CGS 1-200(6)(D) Discussion of Arbor Haven proposal to purchase former Country Club of Woodbridge property:

MOTION – The following motion was **MOVED** by Mr. Kuriakose, and **SECONDED** by Mr. Crisco: *“to authorize the First Selectman, Finance Director/Administrative Officer, and Town Counsel to take the next necessary steps to begin discussions with Arbor Haven in order to finalize purchase price, amount of acreage, open space, mix and amount of residential units, and any other terms and conditions of the offer, in anticipation of a possible referendum whereby voters will decide whether or not to sell the property.”*

VOTE: Aye – Heller, Crisco, McCreven, Kuriakose
Nay – Lober, Vogel

Ms. Heller declared the motion carried

Item 16b. CGS 1-200(6)(D) Discussion of Offer from Woodbridge Land Trust/Woodbridge Park Association for conservation easement at former Country Club of Woodbridge

MOTION – the following motion was **MOVED** by Mr. Kuriakose, **SECONDED** by Ms. McCreven: *“to reject the offer from the Woodbridge Land Trust/Woodbridge Park Association for \$250,000.00 to place a conservation easement on approximately 140 acres at the former Country Club of Woodbridge property.”*

VOTE: Aye – Heller, Crisco, McCreven, Kuriakose
Nay – Lober, Vogel

Ms. Heller declared the motion carried

Item 16d. CGS 1-200(6)(B), 210 (b)(4) – Strategy and negotiations re Cell Tower Siting Council decision @ 118 Newton Road (pending litigation)

MOTION – the following motion was **MOVED** by Ms. McCreven, **SECONDED** by Dr. Lober: *“to retain outside counsel to take appeal of Connecticut Siting Council decision to locate the cell tower at 118 Newton Road”.*

VOTE: Aye – Heller, Crisco, Kuriakose, Lober, McCreven, Vogel

Ms. Heller declared the motion carried unanimously

ADJOURNMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Mr. Vogel, seconded by Ms. McCreven, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Geraldine S. Shaw