

The March 10, 2021, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 5:00 p.m. by First Selectman Beth Heller via teleconference. Ms. Heller declared the following members present via roll call: First Selectman Beth Heller; Deputy First Selectman Mica Cardozo, Joseph J. Crisco, Jr.; Joseph S. Dey, III; Dwight C. Rowland; and Sandra Stein.

Present for staff: Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese; Town Counsel Gerald Weiner; Assistant Administrative Officer Betsy Yagla; Media Specialist Pua Ford; and Mrs. Shaw, Clerk.

Ms. Heller made the following statement: *“In accordance with Governor Ned Lamont’s Executive Order 7b Section 1, which suspends the open meeting requirements of in-person participation, audio and video of this Regular Meeting is being simultaneously televised live on WGATV Channel 79 and youtube@wgatv79, in order to allow the public to view and listen to our meeting”.*

The March 10, 2021 meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen may be viewed on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/zoePLmQOivM>

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REMARKS

“Good evening. Tonight, I am going to update you on our progress with several important issues we have been dealing with, including affordable housing, emergency dispatch and the proposed cell tower.

First, I am pleased to announce that, following last month’s Special Meeting to finalize the charge for the Housing Study Committee, I now have several names of folks who have agreed to serve. As a reminder, the committee will evaluate the data, engage the community, assess housing needs and submit a report to the Board of Selectmen. Kris Sullivan from our Land Use Office has agreed to sit on the committee as a staff representative and we will also have a facilitator to aid the group in their work. I recently sent a letter to all department heads seeking town staff volunteers and have asked for any volunteers from the community in several letters and communications.

As of tonight, Debra Brander, Harriet Cooper, Mary Dean, Buddy DeGennaro, Nicole Donzello, Elaine Feldman, Kathy Hunter, and Dominic Thomas, have all volunteered to serve. Dwight and Mica, who will both be leaving the Board, and have also agreed to be a part of this committee. I am still reaching out to several others. If you know of anyone willing to join the group, please let me know as soon as possible.

Once the membership is complete, work will begin in earnest to begin to create the state-mandated Affordable Housing Plan. Meanwhile, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission continues to work through the application asking to amend the Zoning Regulations and the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development to permit multi-family housing in most of the Town’s residential districts, with affordable housing. You may view the application, other documents, and videos of the Public Hearings on the Town Plan & Zoning Commission page on the Town website.

As a reminder, all the hearings are streamed live on local access cable Channel 79, on the WGATV YouTube channel, and on Webex. The meeting agenda on the Town website includes the link to view as well as participate in the meetings. I am confident that the Zoning Commission will review the application in a fair, thorough, and thoughtful way, and provide an opportunity for all sides to be heard. I

am equally confident that Woodbridge will remain the wonderful community that we have all come to love.

Tonight, in Executive Session, which is at the end of our agenda, we will discuss the report received from our dispatch consultant, and hopefully finalize that so it will then become a Final Report and available to anyone for review. Tony and I are working with our consultant Mike Boucher to begin the recommended round table discussions between the fire and police departments.

There has also been some movement on the proposed call tower issue. Earlier today Verizon performed a transmit test at the proposed 118 Newton Road tower site. I did drive up to the site and saw the crane. It is unfortunate that Verizon continues to move forward with this site. Attorney Weiner and I have had meetings with the Town's cell tower attorney, Ira Bloom, and David Maxson with the engineering firm of Isotrope Wireless. We shared with them the list of alternative locations that we have sent to Verizon. Isotrope will now begin the process of independent review of some thirty or so alternate locations that the Town has suggested. I remain committed to try to seek placement of the cell tower in an area that does NOT impact a residential neighborhood. The current proposed site, in my opinion is totally unacceptable. We will keep you, and the townspeople, updated as we learn more.

Last week, I met virtually with former First Selectman Ellen Scalettar who chairs the Town's Ad Hoc Diversity & Inclusion Committee and Woodbridge Superintendent Dr. Budd to discuss how to work together on some of these issues. Both had some good ideas as to how each of their committees might move forward on this important issue. I am also excited to report that the Ad Hoc Diversity & Inclusion Committee is working on hosting an event later this summer or fall to celebrate our town's diversity.

*Late last week I attended a virtual meeting with all Congressional District Three mayors and first selectmen, hosted by US Rep Rosa DeLauro. It was a most informative meeting, as we received an update on the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Package, which has since been approved by the US Senate, and was today approved by the US House. Rosa explained that this is **only the beginning** of a process that will help states and people so terribly impacted by the pandemic. Secondly, the Congress will soon begin work on a Recovery Package to begin much needed infrastructure improvements to our nation, such as bridges and highways.*

As I previously told the Board, I have been working with Rosa's office for several years, and Woodbridge finally received funding approval as part of the federal Water Resources Development Act, for a study to determine a solution to the horrible flooding issues in lower Woodbridge. I recently submitted a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers to proceed to the next steps, which was emailed to you yesterday. Once this study is complete, Woodbridge will then be eligible to apply for federal dollars to remediate the situation. This will not be a quick solution, but it has finally begun.

Yesterday, Tony, Betsy, Warren and I virtually attended a SCRCOG Webinar which I found very interesting, entitled Better Materials Management, offering new solutions on ways to save money and reduce trash. We will get more Woodbridge specific data to them, and perhaps provide a presentation in

the near future to the full Board, for further discussion. We may also explore partnering with neighboring towns such as Bethany and Orange on this program.

This month marks the one-year anniversary since COVID-19 changed our world, and our Town. We last met together in person on March 11, 2020. Betsy sent out an email that week informing everyone that Town Offices will be Closed to the Public as of Noon on March 13th. None of us will ever forget this. These remain difficult and lonely times, but they are also hopeful times. Woodbridge is among the top municipalities in the state, with the most residents having received a first vaccine shot. Our Human Services Department is doing an incredible job of helping residents get vaccinated. They were able to hold two on-site clinics here in Woodbridge working with our partner, Quinnipiack Valley Health District (QVHD), to vaccinate our town's most vulnerable seniors. They transported residents who could not drive themselves to vaccine appointments out of town and have helped dozens of other residents get appointments at QVHD's North Haven vaccine clinic. As of March 1, residents age 55 and up and educators are now eligible, and on March 22 eligibility will expand to residents age 45 and up. If you need help making an appointment, please visit the Town website and fill out our vaccination form. You may also call the Human Services Department at 203-389-3430 for further assistance.

Our number of vaccinated residents is going up, and the number of positive tests continues to go down. However, we are still in the "red zone", meaning that there are more than 15 positive cases per 100,000 residents. Using this number allows a small town like Woodbridge to compare its positivity rate to a larger place like New Haven. Currently we are at 25. Last week we were at 26. We are not yet out of the woods. Our Town Staff Safety Committee is meeting to discuss how and when to begin opening Town buildings and programs. Once details are ironed out, we will let everyone know. Let us not forget, that Connecticut folks are still hurting. Rosa mentioned at the meeting that Connecticut has an 8% unemployment rate, and people are still experiencing food insecurity and housing issues.

I am hopeful that there are better days ahead. Thank you for ALL you have done this past year."

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Budd

- COVID-19 Vaccinations – Dr. Budd said that due to the hard work of QVHD 100% of interested and available members of the Beecher Road School staff have been vaccinated
- Read Across America Celebration – will be held the first week of June which will allow in-person readers to read to the children outside. Those who prefer will be able to read to some classes remotely
- Budget FY2021 – Dr. Budd said that through a dedicated cost reduction program and COVID-19, he expects that the current deficit will be reduced to "\$0" by the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2021)
- Budget FY2022 – Dr. Budd thanked the Boards of Selectmen and Finance for support of the Board of Education's proposed budget for FY2022. He said that he has recommended some downward adjustments to the FY2022 budget

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Cardozo: He said that he was not able to attend the Recreation Commission and the Economic Development Commission meetings.

Agriculture Commission – will make a presentation to the Selectmen this evening relating the leases for Town farmland. At a previous meeting officers elected were: Chair, Christian Sorensen; Vice Chair, Andrea Urbano; and the other members will share the role of secretary.

Ordinance Committee – meeting next week specifically to address the ordinance on hazardous material as it relates to artificial turf type fields.

Mr. Crisco: Town Plan & Zoning Commission – New England Brewery withdrew the application to construct a facility on Litchfield Turnpike. It was speculated that something was worked out at the current location. Multi-housing was discussed; there will be a special meeting related to the application on March 18, 2021.

Mr. Dey: No report

Mr. Rowland: Inland Wetlands Agency – Applications for 15 and 21 Wolf Tree Drive; 22 Rimmon Road are on hold. Applications for 181 Ford Road and 91 Forest Glen Drive were approved. Application for 38 Hunting Hill Road is still under review.

Human Services – send out 700 “robo-call” to residents 65 and over regarding vaccine appointments. As of March 18, 2021, 25% of the Town’s eligible residents has been vaccinated. He complemented the department on its accomplishment. Tax preparation assistance for seniors is underway. The Commission is very excited about the planned renovations to the facility. Nominations for the People’s Bank sponsored First Selectman’s Youth Award are due April 12. They plan to use the Enhancement Grant to sponsor virtual assistance for students in the afterschool study program at Beecher Road School.

Ms. Stein: Library Commission – the Friends of the Library will accept donations on April 24th between 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.; the celebration of the life of Barbara Rader is scheduled for Sunday, June 6th – Mark Shanker is the guest speaker. Budget discussion – the Commission is concerned that given the Board of Finance cuts to its proposed FY2022 budget the Library will not be able to open to the extent expected by the patrons. The Commission will send a counter proposal to the Board of Finance.

The Library Director is interested in the planned renovations to The Center gym and how the Library can utilize the gym for programming.

UP-DATE FROM THE AGRICULTURE COMMISSION – Christian Sorensen, Chair

Members joining as attendees: Kristyna Hulland, Steve Munno, and Andrea Urbano
Mr. Sorensen thanked Selectman Cardozo for his assistance in organizing this new Commission.

Mr. Sorensen that the Commission is first concentrating on the needs of the farmers that lease Town owned farmland. He submitted the following proposal for the Board’s consideration:

The Agricultural Committee Proposal on Town Owned leased property.

1. Extending present 1 year lease from 1 to 5 years
2. Reason why:
 - A) Long Term Planning
 - B) Grants & cost sharing thru USDA and NRCS
 - C) State matching funds

- D) Technical support
- E) Farm bill & USDA/the core to their mission
- 3. Managing of Property
 - A) Turnover
 - B) 1-3 years of holding a Town lease & showing the Town that he or she can manage the property. Yearly lease
 - C) 3 plus years of having Alease with the Town 5 years lease
 - D) Monetary cost according to the yearly rate
- 4. Allow farms with a permitted farm stand to sell products produced else by another farm or producer, including but not limited to produce, eggs, maple syrup, honey, meats, mushrooms, etc.
 - a. Products that are not produced by the farm or orchard on which the stand is located should be clearly labeled with their place of origin.

Mr. Sorensen said that the Commission understands that item #4, Farm Stands, falls under the Zoning Regulations and would have to be amended by that Commission. He noted that other towns in the area, Bethany, Orange, Milford, and New Haven allow such sales of local/Connecticut products. This not only opens-up other avenues for the farmers but provides venues for the public to access local produce.

The Board agreed that Town Counsel Weiner should prepare a draft addressing the issues for the next Selectmen's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

APPROVE TOWN CLERK'S APPLICATION FOR TARGETED GRANT

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Cardozo) to authorize the Town Clerk to submit an application for the FY2022 Historic Documents Targeted Grant in the amount of \$5,500.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE'S REPORT

Monthly Report – Mr. Genovese reported that as of February 28, 2021 he is projecting a year-end budget surplus of \$166,209. Because the current Town budget includes an allocation from fund balance of \$400,000, projected decrease to fund balance at year end is \$233,791. Fund balance at 6/30/2021 is projected to be \$6.26M or 12.53% of annual projected expenses.

Intergovernmental Revenue is projected to generate a surplus of \$131,444 for FY2021 primarily due to the receipt of \$163,320 in Corona Virus Relief and FEMA funds to offset COVID-19 related costs from FY20 and a surplus in special education excess cost funds. The Town is in the process of applying for reimbursement for all eligible expenses related to storm Isaias.

FUNDING REQUESTS

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

2021-18 - Allocation

Amount: \$45,500.00

To: Dept. of Public Works Overtime (1310-00/50410)

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

For: To fund shortage in the Public Works Overtime account due to storms

(Heller – Stein) Unanimously Approved

2021-18 B – Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$20,000.00
To: Dept. of Public Works Seasonal Wages (1310-00/50320) \$ 5,500.00
Overtime (1310-00/50410) \$14,500.00
From: Dept. of Public Works Highway Wages (110-00/50230)
For: To fund shortages in the Overtime and Seasonal Wages accounts.
(Heller – Stein) Unanimously Approved

2021-19 – Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$11,000.00
To: Building Maintenance - Building Repairs (1370-00/53530)
From: Building Maintenance - Equipment Parts (1370-00/55140) \$ 6,000.00
Overtime (1370-00/50410) \$ 3,000.00
Part Time Main. (1379-00/50330) \$ 2,000.00
(Heller – Rowland) Unanimously Approved

2021-20 – Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$1,700.00
To: Assessor – Printing and Binding (1160-00/54400)
From: Assessor – Car Allowance (1160-00/54500) \$1,300.00
Assessor – Prof. Dev – Conferences (1160-00/54610) \$ 400.00
For: Transfer to address shortage in Printing and Binding account
(Heller – Cardozo) Unanimously Approved

2021-21 – Allocation Amount: \$45,000.00
To: Board of Selectmen Legal Fees – Litigation (1110-00/52130)
From: Board of Finance Contingency (1170-00/56800)
For: To fund a variety of legal issues facing the Town this fiscal year. This request is in addition to the \$45,000 requested and approved in December 2020
(Heller – Stein) Unanimously Approved

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER’S REPORT

Ms. Yagla gave an update on the Town Center Campus Beautification Plan. She listed accomplishments such as the garden and benches on the Green and Dog Park and proposed plans such as improvements to the “Grove”, recreational activities, holding community events, signage, new walk-ways, paint buildings, and refresh/improve landscaping.

A full copy of the presentation may be found on the Town’s website on the Board of Selectmen Page.

Use of Town property - Troop 907 Boy Scouts of America – Flower Sale

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Stein – Rowland) to approve Troop 907 BSA’s request To hold a flower sale on the Old Fire House Triangle 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - April 10 – April 24, 2021 and to display signs on Town property announcing the sale.

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE TOWN CLERK’S REPORT

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Stein) to acknowledge receipt of the Town Clerk’s Reports for the month ending February 28, 2021 and cumulative from July 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021.

MINUTES

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED** to approve the following minutes:

February 10, 2021 – Regular Meeting – Unanimously Approved (Heller – Crisco)

February 17, 2021 – Special Meeting – Unanimously Approved (Heller – Stein)

February 23, 2021 – Regular Meeting – Unanimously Approved (Heller – Crisco)

RESIGNATION

The Board of Selectmen acknowledged, with regret, the resignation of Kathleen Wallace as a member of the Town Plan & Zoning Commission for a term ending June 30, 2023. The Board expressed its deep appreciation for Ms. Wallace’s 12 plus years of dedication and service to the residents of Woodbridge.

TOWN COUNSEL’S REPORT

Mr. Weiner said that he had no report except for what was to be heard in executive session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:12 p.m. the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to move into executive session pursuant to C.G.S. 1-200(6)(C); 1-200(6)(E); 1-210(b)(1) discussion of Dispatch and Security Report

At 6:31 p.m. the Board of Selectmen moved out of executive session and returned to the Regular Meeting. Ms. Heller declared that no motions were made or votes taken in executive session.

ACTION AS APPROPRIATE ON MATTER DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Stein – Rowland) to formally accept the Dispatch Report by the Town’s consultant, Michael Boucher, as presented to the Board of Selectmen with no changes.

ADJOURNMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Cardozo, the meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk

