

The September 8, 2021, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 6:00 p.m. by First Selectman Beth Heller, via WebEx.

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; and Mrs. Shaw, Clerk.

The meeting may be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/dMHimk4cz6E>

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS

"Good evening, everyone. I first want to send a big "Thank you" to our Human Services team. They organized a group of Town staff members to walk around our Town Center Campus last week to participate virtually in the Walk to End Alzheimer's. The team surpassed their goal of \$500 by raising \$539. Congratulations to them all!

I understand there has been some concerns raised by some Woodbridge residents about the fate of the dog park, as the leadership of the Dog Park Cooperative is seeking new volunteer members. I can assure you at this time that the Town has NO plans to close the dog park. It is entirely run by volunteers as was promised when the Board of Selectmen granted the request to create one. As was discussed for months in 2019 the Board was also promised that there would be no Town tax dollars put toward the park. It is attractive, well used and well run, and I have faith that there will be a new group of volunteers, ready to step and take over to continue managing this asset. Again, I will reiterate that at this time the Town has no intention of closing the dog park.

You as members of the Board of Selectmen recently received a letter with an offer from Doug Gray of Eclipse Development Group, to purchase 25 acres of the 155 acres at the former Country Club of Woodbridge. This is the development group working on behalf of New England Brewing Company, as they seek to expand their operation. The proposal is to build a state-of-the-art brewery and event center along with approximately 10 acres of rental housing with an affordable component. The proposed purchase price is \$1.5M and the desired location is the area where the clubhouse sits and the tennis court area. Developer Doug Gray was invited to make a presentation to you this evening, but he informed that as he is unable to attend tonight, he would like to present to us at our October meeting. I will add him to that agenda.

On August 31st, I attended the continued Evidentiary Hearing of the CT Siting Council. If you recall, Verizon is proposing to build a new cell tower in a residential neighborhood at a private residence at 118 Newton Road. This is a private transaction between a neighbor and Verizon, however the Town has tried to work with the neighborhood to prevent a cell tower from being built in ANY residential neighborhood in Town. I was virtually participating in the hearing from 2-5 pm and was ready to testify but was not called upon. The hearing has been continued to September 21st, and I expect to be called upon to state that the Town's answers to the Council's questions are accurate and also answer any questions the Council or other attorneys might ask.

Tomorrow there will be a crane test to verify Verizon's data at the height of the proposed tower on Newton Road and also at another site behind the Public Works facility. This is being organized and paid

for by the residents' group who are opposing the proposed site, along with their attorney Keith Ainsworth and their engineer David Maxson. I will keep you informed. The videos of the two previous hearings have been sent to the Town Clerk, and I believe are also showing on WGATV.

This Saturday is the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Woodbridge Volunteer Fire Association is holding a remembrance ceremony which will begin at approximately 8:30 a.m., at the front of the new Firehouse on Center Road in front of the 9-11 Memorial. I would encourage everyone to attend. It is hard to believe it has been 20 years ...

Last month I told you that the Town earned another audit award from the Government Finance Officers Association. This month I'm excited to announce that our Finance Department is creating a new, more user-friendly, transparent and interactive budget document. I anticipate this document will be on our website later by October. I believe this new format will help residents more easily see how their tax dollars are used, and I encourage everyone to read the budget and the audit to be better informed residents.

Let me say again, I would ask the Selectmen to please encourage residents to get involved in the budget process now. The budget is discussed and debated at public meetings for months before it is presented to the public at the Preliminary Budget Hearing in April and the Annual Town Meeting in May. There are many opportunities to make voices heard and get answers to your questions.

The Town department's capital budget requests are due in November and the Board of Finance will begin discussing them in December. To our residents - if there is a particular budget that you're interested in, or believe you have ideas for ways to improve any budget, please attend that commission's virtual meetings to learn more and offer your suggestions. This is the time to let commissions and departments hear from you!

All town meetings continue to be held virtually due to the higher rate of COVID-19 transmission. The State Department of Public Health updates the COVID-19 data tracker website showing a map of CT towns. Woodbridge, like most of our neighbors are back in the red zone. Red is defined by a transmission rate of 15 positive cases per 100,000 people. This allows the State and residents to compare transmission rates across towns. We are currently at 24.5. We have sent a message to our local businesses strongly encouraging them to require masks, regardless of vaccination status of their employees. The Library has canceled indoor programming, and both the Library and Human Services are still trying to do many programs outside.

Lastly, as you may have heard, the Senior Center is currently closed to indoor programming because it flooded during tropical storm Ida last week. We are in touch with our insurance company, and plan to follow any floodproofing recommendations they have when we complete the renovation.

Thank you all and please continue to do all you can to stay safe."

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Budd

Dr. Budd reported:

- Students and staff are back to full in-person attendance
- There is a 3% increase in enrollment – 830
- An evaluation of the buildings is being done in advance of preparation of the Capital Budget
- ARPA/Esser funds being considered for building improvements

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT – Benjamin Rickel – Upgrade the Town Bulletin Board

Benjamin Rickel described his proposed project to refurbish the Town Bulletin Board outside the Town Clerk's Office; post information re the America Flag (how to display, fold, retire); install plexiglass to protect posted documents; provide a refurbished USPS collection box to collect retired flags; and some light landscaping.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Vogel – McCreven) to approve Benjamin Rickel's proposal to refurbish the Town Bulletin Board outside the Town Clerk's Office and to install a repainted mailbox to receive American flags to be properly retired. Additionally, the Town Clerk requested that the words "Flags Only" be painted on both sides of the box.

LIAISON REPORTS – Note: Some Boards and Commissions do not meet in August

Mr. Crisco: Fire Commission – reported that at the August meeting the Fire Commission adopted a resolution stating: *"The Fire Commission recommends that immediate steps should be taken by the Board of Selectmen to outsource the fire and 9-1-1 dispatch systems to a regional service provider."*

Mr. Kuriakose: Amity Board of Education – at the August 6th meeting the Board approved the Budget Advisory Committee's recommendation to retain 1% of last year's surplus returning 1% to the participating towns. The Amity Board of Education is planning a bond issue in the next fiscal year.

Dr. Lober: Conservation Commission – Tim Austin was elected Chair and Sharon deKadt, Vice Chair. The Commission will be seeking grants to complete the Greenway. They are meeting to gather information regarding the existing greenway and plan to create an overlay map to identify gaps in the trail.

Ms. McCreven: Woodbridge Board of Education – updated the COVID Policy for the start of school. Beginning to work on the FY23 budget. As to the ESSER funding – the Board will hold public meetings to gather recommendations for use of the funding. She noted that Dr. Budd and the Interim Business and Facilities Managers are performing a careful evaluation of all the water incursion problems. Ms. McCreven said that she reminded Dr. Budd to keep the Boards of Selectmen and Finance apprised of the findings and proposed funding sources.

Mr. Vogel: Recreation Commission – at the August 23rd meeting, Andrea Weinstein was elected Chair and Smith Mowry, Vice Chair. The Commission wants to be kept in mind regarding and plans for the former country club property. They also expressed concern re wood rot found on the gazebo. Mr. Vogel will assure them that repair is being planned. The summer concerts were very successful; plans for extended day programs are going well; swimming lessons will be available only on Saturday mornings; and several high school and college students have been hired to fill sport leadership positions. The tent from the former country club that the Recreation Dept. planned to use for programming was found to be seriously deteriorated. Ongoing popular programs include: the annual road race on October 2; pickleball, tennis, and the fitness center. There is no programming in the Center Gym due to ventilation and custodial issues.

DARLING HOUSE APARTMENT TENANT LEASE – Amity Woodbridge Historical Society

The Board considered the renewal lease for the apartment at the Darling House. The renewal lease is for 13 months; reflects a new agreement re payment of the water bill; and an amendment to allow for a cat at the residence.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Vogel – Crisco) to authorize the First Selectman to execute the 13- month lease for the Darling House apartment with Kyla DeRisi and Keven Redline, as presented.

ARBOR HAVEN PROPOSAL – next steps

Ms. Heller said that she is seeking consensus from the Board to request that the Arbor Haven group meet with various boards and commissions and for the Selectmen to hold a public information meeting. Mr. Weiner assured the Board, and those in the audience, that a public information meeting is an opportunity for the public to view the presentation and ask questions of the developer. It does not take the place of the required Special Town Meeting and/or a Referendum if the Selectmen should choose to go forward with the proposal under the Charter.

Mr. Vogel said that the Board should be pro-active, decide the direction the Town wants for the property, development or otherwise, and put out an RFP. Not reactive each time someone presents a proposal for the property.

Ms. Heller believes it is appropriate to receive public opinion on the proposal.

Mr. Weiner reminded the Board that nothing is decided until the Board votes to go to Special Town Meeting/Referendum for a vote from the public. It is the taxpayers who will approve sale of the property for this development or any other use.

Ms. McCreven supported holding a public information meeting as it would be an opportunity for the both the Board of Selectmen and the developer to gauge public opinion and for the developer to find ways to make the proposal more in keeping with the sentiment of the public.

Dr. Lober questioned the developer's statement that there would be a tax revenue for the Town. He asked Mr. Genovese how the Amity arrives at the proportionate for each Town. Mr. Genovese explained that it is determined by a percentage of the average daily membership of the student population from each town. On calculation, Mr. Genovese

In response to a question from Dr. Lober about density of the development and a required zone change, Mr. Weiner said that the proposed development fulfills all the requirements under the current zoning regulations. He read the e-mail from Atty. DuBuque that addressed the zone change question: ***"The development area under consideration on the country club property is located in Zone A, in an area which is outside of the public water supply watershed. Under the new regulations enacted by the TPZ permitting multi-family housing, multi-family housing is allowed with a special permit in Zone A areas which are outside of the public water supply watershed. Therefore, development of the country club property can proceed under the new regulations without a zone change."***

Mr. Kuriakose voiced his opinion that the Board would be overstepping if it did not bring the proposal to the residents for input. Other proposals have gone through the same process.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED** (Heller – Crisco) to move forward with the next steps, as described by Ms. Heller, for the Arbor Haven Proposal for the former country club.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE'S REPORT

Monthly Report – Mr. Genovese reported that the report consists of unaudited revenues and expenditures through June 2021. At this time, he projects a surplus of \$216,470 resulting in an unaudited, unassigned fund balance of \$6,714,013 that represents 13.53% of the FY2021 expenditures.

Dr. Lober asked when the surplus would be returned to the taxpayers instead of increasing the fund balance. Mr. Genovese said that the handling of the surplus and the fund balance is set by policy and any change would require a change in the established policy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment either written or via video conference.

TAX REFUNDS

Pursuant to Section 12-124 – 129 of the Connecticut General Statutes and the recommendation of the Tax Collector, the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Vogel) to refund real estate taxes in the amount of \$3,637.95 and motor vehicle in the amount of \$9,807.28 for a total of \$13,445.23.

FUNDING REQUEST

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED** to recommend the following funding request to the Board of Finance:
2122-02 - Interdepartmental Transfer Amount:

\$23,120.00

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| To: | CNR-WGATV-Technology | \$ 7,195 | (302-1350/57410/TECH) |
| | CNR-WGATV-IT | \$ 14,262 | (302-1350-00/57410/IT) |
| | WGATV-Prof. Dev.-Conference | \$ 1,673 | (1135-00/54610) |
| From: | Revenue – Grants | | (1-2-1100/42600) |

Purpose: Transfer Grant Funds received from Area Council to budget.

(Heller – McCreven) Unanimously Approved

AWARD – RFP – SMALL CITIES ADMINISTRATION

On the recommendation of Anthony Genovese and Patricia Crisco, The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Vogel – Kuriakose) to award the administration of the Town’s Small Cities Program Income Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program to A & E Services Group of Wolcott, CT.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) funds – update

Ms. Yagla reported that by December 31, 2024, the Town must commit how it is using the \$2.6M. It must be expended by December 31, 2026. Some of the projects being considered: improvement of outdoor spaces (such as the “Grove”), assistance in the business district, HVAC improvement to the Center gym, upgrades to playgrounds and parks, and financial support for the Food and Fuel Fund.

REQUESTS TO HOLD EVENTS ON TOWN PROPERTY

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve the following requests to hold events on Town property:

- Troop 907 – “MUM” Sale – Old Firehouse Triangle – September 26, 2021 – 9a.m. to 4 p.m. (McCreven – Vogel)
- Woodbridge Together Luminaria Display – Town Center – March 12, 2022 – Noon – 10 p.m. (Heller – Vogel)
- Diversity & Inclusion – Library, Grove – October 2, 2021 – 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. varies activities (Heller – Vogel)

Upcoming events – September 11th 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Town Craft Fair in the Library Parking Lot with activities and food vendors; organizing various Halloween events – possible events are: Beecher Halloween Hoot, Woodbridge Volunteer Fire Association Truck or Treat drive-thru, events in the business district, and a drive through trick or treat at the Willows.

Bike route signs have been put up on the Town roads, the State should have the State road signs up soon.

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE 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 August 31, 2021 and cumulative from July 1, 2021.

MINUTES

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve the following as presented:

- June 23, 2021 – Special Meeting (Heller – Crisco)
- July 28, 2021 – Special Meeting (Heller – Crisco)
- August 11, 2021 – Regular Meeting (Heller – Crisco)

TOWN COUNSEL'S REPORT

Mr. Weiner said the neighbors involved in opposing the 118 Newton Road site for a cell tower have formed the WNNET Neighborhood Association. They are having their own coverage test done for the Verizon proposed site at 118 Newton Road. They are requesting to test a site behind the Town Public Works facility that was rejected by Verizon. If the current application is denied, and the Town agrees, the Public Works may be offered. The Association needs the Boards approval to conduct the crane test on Town property.

CELL TOWER TEST – CRANE USE

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Heller) to authorize the WNNET Neighborhood Association to place a crane on Town Property known as 15 Meetinghouse Lane for a cell tower coverage test.

R.F.P. FOR AN EVENT FACILITY ON THE FORMER COUNTRY CLUB PROPERTY

Mr. Weiner said the RFP requested by a group of residents is in draft form. The proposal is for a commercial event facility and will require zone change. The property formerly operated under special regulations for country clubs.

The draft R.F.P will be distributed to the Selectmen in the packet for the October 13, 2021, meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:50 p.m., the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to move into executive session pursuant to: a. CGS 1-200(6)(C) Security/devices re dispatch issues
b. CGS 1-200(6)(B) Litigation – Tax Appeal Settlement – Paul D. Harrigan II, 27 Brook Road

At 8:19 p.m., the Board of Selectmen returned to the Regular Meeting.

ACTION AS APPROPRIATE

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Lober) that: with regard to the Tax Appeal settlement for Paul Harrigan II, 27 Brook Road, Woodbridge, CT to approve the findings according to the facts and stipulations presented.

ADJOURMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Crisco, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw