

The July 28, 2021, Special Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 5:02 p.m. by First Selectman Beth Heller via WebEx.

Present via rollcall: Joseph Crisco, First Selectman Beth Heller, Paul Kuriakose, Sheila McCreven, Dr. David Lober, David Vogel.

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

Link to access video of meeting: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSpOiCDmZ\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSpOiCDmZ_g)

#### **FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS**

*"Good evening. I am pleased that the Board has agreed to continue virtual meetings, and I will continue that policy until the state COVID positivity rate becomes more favorable. It was discussed at the monthly SCRCOG meeting this morning that the Governor's office may be setting new mask guidelines in the near future, relative to the new CDC recommendations, as cases continue to rise nationwide.*

*I will open tonight's discussion at this Special Board of Selectmen meeting with wonderful news – we recently received notification that we have been awarded \$300,000 in State bonding funds to complete renovations to the Senior Center. This additional State funding, coupled with the \$128,205 STEAP Grant we already have been awarded, and the \$10,000 funding match from the Human Services Department, allows the Board of Selectmen to remove this project from our list of projects we need to seek bonding funds for.*

*We have and will continue to seek federal and state funds for every project going forward. I thank our State Senators Jorge Cabrera and James Maroney, and our State Representative Mary Welander for their help, support and guidance on this most deserving project, and our Town Attorney Weiner, and State Bond Commission State Senator Sean Scanlon for shepherding this through the State Bond Commission over the past year or so.*

*At tonight's meeting we will learn more details from Tony Genovese and Architect David Stein about the potential bonding project to convert the Old Firehouse into a beautiful new Community Center and create a storage facility for the Fire Department, refurbish three roofs at Beecher Road School, and add a sidewalk to connect Amity Regional High School with the Library and Old Firehouse, and the Town Center.*

*Upon further consideration, we have removed the demolition of the clubhouse at the former Country Club of Woodbridge. After meeting with several interested Woodbridge residents, there may be a possibility that we (the Board of Selectmen) will be sending out an RFP seeking responses for the sale of several acres of the property including the clubhouse, for a possible hotel/banquet facility. Additionally, as I reported to you at our Regular meeting earlier this month, we have had an inquiry from a developer interested in purchasing 100 acres for housing. We may be hearing from that developer at the August meeting.*

*We cannot create a Community Center for all our residents without creating a storage facility to house the Fire Department equipment and materials that have been stored in two bays in the Old Firehouse for close to fifteen years, following a devastating fire in 2006. The sidewalk project will finally provide a safe, off-road connection between the high school and the Town Center Campus and will become even more important once the community center is finalized.*

*Due to the expense and time involved in bonding and given that we are retiring debt this year and next year, and interest rates are extremely low right now, it makes the best sense to combine these projects and complete them now. Thus, in sum, I believe this is an opportune time to bond these projects as our debt service payments will be going down.*

*In my opinion, these projects will transform the center of our Town into a more dynamic, active and attractive place that will help us create and sustain the sense of community that is sometimes hard to come by due to our geography. Coming out of a pandemic I believe that community building is even more important than ever.*

*The goal this evening is to have new (and returning members) of the Board ask questions and get answers to all your questions about these projects, and then hopefully vote on whether to take these projects to the public to let them decide to approve them at a referendum.”*

### **PROPOSED PROJECTS FOR BONDING**

David Stein of Silver Petrucelli was present to answer questions re the proposed projects. He presented a power point detailing the projects and explained how the projects have changed over time as original plans were changed due to building code issues, insurance issues, and specific uses no longer planned (such as the Amity High School request for life skills education).

The Board members also had for review: Costs by project prepared by Mr. Genovese, the Capital Budget Project Summary for the Beecher School Roofs and the Old Fire House Renovation.

Dr. Lober said that the community center, storage facility, and sidewalk were very nice, but he did not see the demonstrated need for them – especially when spending tax-payers’ money to bond the expense.

Ms. Heller, Mr. Weiner, and Mr. Genovese offered the following:

- A community center offers the opportunity to expand programs, offer new and/or requested programs, provide a space for private events, meeting space – private and public, and space for the fitness center
- The storage facility is required to free-up the old fire house for renovation; and replaces the storage that was planned, and then “valued engineered” out, of the new fire house.
- The sidewalk from Amity to the campus center, library, and Fitzgerald Fields resolves a safety issue

Mr. Vogel questioned the need to use bonding to refurbish the Beecher Road School Roofs and recommended that project be paid for from the Fund Balance.

Mr. Genovese said that the Town has a policy that outlines the approved uses for the fund balance which includes emergencies and to offset future tax increases. Mr. Weiner spoke to the Charter re “Supplemental Appropriations and the \$50,000 threshold.” Other members of the Board spoke against accessing the fund balance for rotating routine maintenance of the school building.

Mr. Vogel asked, that if the roofs were leaking, why were they being only refurbished instead of replaced.

Ms. McCreven explained that there was a scheduled roof maintenance for the school and probably this was a question for the Superintendent’s Office.

**PROPOSED PROJECTS FOR BONDING – Action as appropriate**

The Board agreed that the question of bonding, and for which projects, was the decision of the residents/taxpayers and should be put to a referendum vote.

Ms. McCreven **MOVED** and Mr. Crisco **SECONDED** that the Board of Selectmen authorize the First Selectman, Finance Director, and Town Counsel to work with Bond Counsel to prepare the resolution and information for a Special Town Meeting and Referendum for presentation and action by the Board of Selectmen at the August 11, 2021, Regular Meeting.

**VOTE** via rollcall: Aye – Joseph Crisco  
Beth Heller  
Paul Kuriakose  
David Lober  
Sheila McCreven  
David Vogel  
Nay – None  
Abstention – None

Ms. Heller declared the motion approved

**NOTE:** While not in the Motion – during discussion it was agreed the projects to be included for the bond issue are: Former Fire House and Storage Facility to be bundled as one project called Community Center Renovation - \$2,265,000; Beecher Roofs - \$575,000; and Town Center Sidewalks - \$390,000.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. McCreven, seconded by Mr. Vogel, the meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk