

<https://www.youtube.com/live/kfSsiDcH4aA?si=E5l8C3N85nBvrGcT>

The September 13, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened by First Selectman Beth Heller at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Central Meeting Room.

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

Present for Staff: Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese; Town Counsel Gerald Weiner; Media Specialist Matthew Dibudio; and Clerk Geraldine Shaw

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS

Good evening and welcome to the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Board of Selectmen. I have been looking at the weather these days and am glad to see it looks as if the latest in a series of early hurricanes will steer clear of us. I am grateful for the opportunity to remind you all that September is Hurricane Preparedness month. Please be sure to stock up on batteries, water, pet food, medications, and other supplies in the event we do have a weather emergency.

The 5th annual Living Treasure event is planned for tomorrow evening at the Woodbridge Center. It is exciting to congratulate this year's winners Mary Lee Barker, Matthew Giglietti, Joseph Crisco, and Lynn Piascyk. I am looking forward to a wonderful event, and it is my privilege to honor their collective decades of service to Woodbridge.

I hope you will add the 3rd Annual *Woodbridge Like Me Day* to your calendars. This event is hosted by the Woodbridge Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The free event was created to bring residents together to celebrate the vibrant and diverse **Woodbridge community**. No matter how long you have lived in Town, there are great reasons for everyone to attend this event on September 30th. Further information is on the Town Website!

We will hold a dedication and naming ceremony for *The Karen Lombardi Animal Shelter* and the new memorial garden to honor the donors on Friday, October 13. Stay tuned for further information about this upcoming exciting event.

We received several responses from the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the former Country Club of Woodbridge property, for land use consultants, which was sent this past summer. If you recall, this came as one recommendation first, from the Strategic Plan subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen, made up of Selectmen McCreven and Vogel. This plan was unanimously approved by the full Board. Following that approval, the RFP was developed by Selectmen Kuriakose, Vogel and me, with input from Administrative Officer Tony Genovese (and approved unanimously by this Board, prior to its distribution. I believe it is not appropriate for this board to review, discuss, or decide on the proposals at this time, as four out of six of us will not be returning to the Board of Selectmen, it seems much more suitable for the new board to take up this matter with their vision for the future of that property. Hopefully, should the new Board choose to use a consultant, this new person will take input from all stakeholders including residents and businesses. This effort will hopefully build a consensus while providing positive proposals for the Town.

The COVID-19 virus infection rate has been steadily rising lately. It is essential that our residents get vaccinated, especially those who are most vulnerable. To meet this need, the Human Services Department will host four vaccine clinics this fall beginning on September 26th in the Center Building gymnasium. There will be two flu vaccine only clinics and two clinics with 5 vaccines available including: (new) COVID 19, RSV,

Shingrix, Prevnar 20- the new pneumonia vaccine, and regular and high dose flu vaccine. I want to offer my congratulations to this department for seeking and receiving a federal grant to provide better access to vaccines for our community. The \$10,000 grant from the National Council on Aging will support the Human Services Department's work in making it as easy as possible for older adults and people with disabilities to get their updated vaccinations and protect their health.

As a reminder, the Municipal Election will be held on Tuesday, November 7th. Absentee ballot **applications** are available now and may be obtained from the Town Clerk's office and are also on the Town website. Absentee **ballots** will be available on October 6 and can be completed by mail or in-person. Contact the Town Clerk's office at 203-389-3424 for more information.

And just one more reminder for your calendars. Please do not forget that Veteran's Day will be commemorated on November 10 in the Center Building Gymnasium at 11 am. We will have further updates on this ceremony as it comes closer.

WOODBRIAGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Vonda Tencza

Ms. Tencza reported that:

- enrollment stands at 883 and a classroom has been added
- average class size is 18 – 21 students
- summer programs, enrichment, and recreation programs were all very successful
- Vinny Lynch is now the school security officer
- staff Convocation theme this year was/is gratitude /notes of appreciation

Dr. Lober asked what type of space was the Board seeking, an addition, a new school, etc. Ms. Tencza said an experienced designer is required to study the school's space utilization and present options for consideration.

Ms. McCreven noted that the current building committee is working on Beecher Road School Capital Projects, such as the roof repair/replacement, not space needs. There is a separate committee working on space needs for future growth and programming.

ORDINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT – Ms. McCreven

Ms. McCreven reported on the Committee's recommendations regarding proposed amendments to the Ordinances. The Board considered each and acted as follows:

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED** on referring the proposed changes to the Ordinance as described in the packet to a Public Hearing at 6:00 p.m. during the October 11, 2023, Board of Selectmen meeting.

Section III – Fire Commission 75-22 Duties and Powers C – (McCreven – Heller) –per request of the Fire Commission, this proposal would repeal the Commission's annual evaluation of the performance of the Fire Marshal.

VOTE: Aye – Heller, McCreven, Crisco, Kuriakose, Lober, Vogel
Nay – None

Article IX – Tax Abatement for Fire Department Personnel – (McCreven – Vogel) – this request would increase the tax abatement for eligible fire personnel to \$2,000 in accordance with CGS 12-81w. § 382-2. Abatement granted – shall be amended as follows:

The property taxes of each firefighter who has served as a volunteer firefighter for the Town of Woodbridge for not less than two (2) immediately preceding calendar years (includes probationary year) and who has active membership in the Woodbridge Volunteer Fire Association, inc., and meets the requirements of this article shall have any real and/or motor vehicle property taxes owed to the Town of Woodbridge by such firefighter abated in an amount equal to the lesser of the total amount of real and/or motor vehicle property taxes owed to said town for such fiscal year or an amount as set forth in the following schedule:

§ 382-21 A. shall be amended as follows:

- A. For two or more years of service abated by \$2,000.00
- B. Deleted
- C. Deleted

§ 382-23. Application of abatement shall be amended as follows:

The tax abatement under this article shall be applied against any real property taxes owing to the Town of Woodbridge and or to motor vehicle taxes owing to the Town of Woodbridge at the sole choice of the volunteer firefighter. In the event that the tax to which the abatement is applied is paid in installments, then the exemption shall be applied 50% percent to each installment. In no event will the tax abatement, in combination with other tax benefits for which the volunteer may be eligible, exceed the volunteer's total tax obligation to his/her town of residence.

§ 382-25. Applicability.

The tax abatement under this article shall be applicable for any real property or motor vehicle of a volunteer firefighter eligible for such abatement, whether such property is owned individually, jointly, or as tenant in common with one or more other persons.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in section 382-7, if property is held in trust for a volunteer firefighter who would otherwise qualify for this tax abatement, the tax relief may still be granted if the volunteer firefighter is the primary beneficiary of the trust during his or her lifetime and meets all other requirements under this program. The application for tax abatement shall contain a copy of the trust agreement which shall be reviewed and approved by the Assessor and Town Counsel prior to approval of the application.

Effective Date: The amendments herein shall take effect and be applicable to taxes owing beginning with taxes on the grant list of October 1, 2023.

Motion to Table: during discussion, Mr. Vogel moved and Dr. Lober seconded to Table consideration of amendments to this ordinance until the new Board of Selectmen took office in January 2024 as the increased benefit would impact that Board's budget.

VOTE to Table: Aye - Lober, Vogel
Nay - Heller, McCreven, Crisco, Kuriakose

VOTE to refer to public hearing: Aye – Heller, McCreven, Crisco, Kuriakose, Lober
Nay – Vogel

Chapter 42. Funds – Article I. Country Club Enterprise Fund – recommendation to rescind in its entirety as the Town of Woodbridge no longer operates such club as described within the context of this article. (McCreven – Heller)

VOTE: Aye – Heller, McCreven, Crisco, Kuriakose, Lober, Vogel
Nay – None

Other: Dr. Lober asked if his proposal to freeze taxes for property owners 65 years of age and over would be considered at the public hearing; Ms. McCreven asked him to present written information re his proposal.

WOODBIDGE VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSOCIATION – TRUCK OR TREAT

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) to approve the WVFA request to hold the October 31, 2023, (rain date – November 1, 2023) Truck of Treat event only, at the Fire House, 100 Center Road. The requested use of the Fitzgerald Tract for the Fire Works was not acted on pending additional information.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE’S REPORT – Mr. Genovese

Monthly Report – Mr. Genovese reported that the unaudited report of revenues and expenditures for fiscal year 2023 projects a surplus of \$893,902 giving the Town an unaudited unassigned fund balance of 9,479,818 and represents 17.70% of the FY2023 expenditures.

FUNDING REQUESTS

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

#2324-03 – Interdepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 9,542.00
To: CNR-Building Maintenance – Vehicle Replacement (302-3700/57450/RVEH)
From: CNR-Public Works Heavy Equipment (203-3100/57410/PWHEQ)
For: Fund the shortfall in the Vehicle Replacement budget for the purchase of a Building Maintenance vehicle.

(Heller – McCreven) Unanimously approved

#2324-04-Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 1,200.00
To: CNR-Public Works Tuck Replacement (302-3100/57450/TRPL)
From: CNR-Public Works Heavy Equipment (302-3100/57410/PWHEQ)
For: Cover shortfall in the Truck Replacement Reserve to purchase a Public Works Department Pickup Truck.

(Heller – Crisco) Unanimously approved

#2324-05-Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 8,516.00
To: CNR-Darling House Renovate Cow Barn (302-3700/57200/COW)
From: CNR-Darling House Replace Chimney (302-3700/57200/DARL)
For: Cover shortfall in Cow Barn Renovation. This will complete the project

(Heller – Lober) – Unanimously approved

#2324-06 – Interdepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 4,600.00
To: CNR-Building Maintenance Vehicle Replacement (302-3700/57470/BMWTR)
From: CNR-Prior PO’s cancellation of PO’s (302/46500)
For: Develop a solution to flooding problems that exist at the ramp of the senior center

(Heller – Crisco) - Unanimously approved

BID WAIVER – to purchase under State Contract:

Building Maintenance Pick-up Truck – The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to authorize the purchase of a pick-up truck for the Building Maintenance Department from Gengras Ford under State Contract #19PSX0161 for \$59,541.60.

Public Works Pick-up Truck – The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to authorize the purchase of a pick-up truck for the Public Works Department from Gengras Ford under State Contract #19PSX0161 for \$61,112.80.

Police Department Portable and Mobile Radio Replacement Project – The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) to authorize the Police Department to move forward with the Portable and Mobile Radio Replacement Project under State Contract #A99-001 and authorized Mr. Genovese to identify funding sources in the amount of \$300,474.05 per Motorola Solutions Quote-2164699.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nick Zito, 115 Sperry Road – stated that since the Town has closed the road to Sperry Park, people park and congregate by the gate, and has blocked the entrance to his family’s property. These groups sometimes walk to the park, but most often openly drink alcohol and /or act inappropriately directly in front of their home.

He also asked for clarification regarding: Road status and maintenance; hours the park is open; who enforces the park rules; and responsibility for removing trash. The letter presented is attached to these minutes.

Ms. McCreven noted that the Town has order metal signs, listing this information, that will be posted at both ends of the closed road and the entrance to the park. Ms. Heller stated that the Board does not usually respond to public comments, but she said she would refer these issues to appropriate departments (police, etc.) for further response.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to offer the position of Assistant Tax Collector Carol Celone at the rate of \$26.26/hour.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to approve/grant the items listed under the Consent Agenda:

Minutes of the July 12, 2023 Regular Meeting

Town Clerk’s Reports for the Months ending July 31, August 31, and cumulative from July 1, 2023 through August 31, 2023.

Acknowledged receipt of resignations from Smith Mowry – Recreation Commission and Robert Sharrer – Economic Development Commission and 2030 Task Force.

Grant permission for use of Town Property for: Library Concert; Troop 63 Holiday Tree Sale;

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Ad Hoc, Woodbridge Like Me Day banner; Troop 907 Potted Mum Sale.

Granted tax refunds in the amount of \$23,198.70 pursuant to the recommendation of the Tax

Collector and CGS Section 12-124 thru 129

TOWN COUNSEL'S REPORT – Gerald Weiner

Mr. Weiner gave a brief update of the status of the Dr. David Lober and Town of Woodbridge et. al. FOIA complaint and an update on the Open Communities Trust LLC vs Woodbridge Town Plan & Zoning.

ADJOURNMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Crisco, the meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk