

**Town of Woodstock
Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Thursday, August 5, 2021 – 4:00PM**

MINUTES

PRESENT: John Swan, Greg Kline, and Chandler Paquette

OTHERS PRESENT: Diane Miller, Charlene Perkins Cutler, Wayne and Dorothy Durst, Amy Monahan, Mike Dougherty, Suzanne Woodward, Anthony Gronski. Crystal Adams, Josh Bottone, and Karen Fitzpatrick

1. Call to Order: First Selectmen Jay Swan called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

2. Approve the Minutes of the July 15, 2021 Regular Board of Selectmen's Meeting: Selectman Greg Kline stated that under agenda item 7. Other from Committee Mr. Kline stated that the first sentence of the first paragraph should read: "Selectmen Greg Kline expressed his concerns with the run-off of water from the banking on Route 171, **as well as the lack of drains on Route 171 adjacent to the Linemaster Switch property and what drains are present appear to be plugged,** heading towards the traffic light in South Woodstock."

Also, in the last paragraph of the minutes Mr. Kline stated that the following sentence "Mr. Swan replied it was a somewhat complicated figure, but he will have answers at a future Board of Selectmen's meeting, the **a** between the words **was** and **somewhat** should be struck.

Selectman Chandler Paquette stated that the under-agenda item 7 the second paragraph it should be clarified that the road work on Route 169, from 171 to 101, will begin much earlier than Labor Day, and that the work will be halted during the Woodstock Fair.

Greg Kline made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 15, 2021 Regular Board of Selectmen's Meeting as amended. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Consider the Request of Holding a Christmas Road Race (The Empire Timing Co) on Town Roads by Mena Shehata, Race Director. Mr. Swan explained the Empire Timing Co has requested approval to hold a road race on December 12, 2021 beginning and ending at Roseland Park. Mena Shehata, the race director stated that the race will begin at Roseland Park, turn right from the park onto Roseland Park Road, turn onto Senexet Road, then turn onto Stone Bridge Road, before turning back on Roseland Park Road, and ending at Roseland Park.

Chandler Paquette made a motion to approve the request to hold a Christmas Road Race on Town Roads by Mena Shehata, Race Director of the Empire Timing Company. **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. Discuss American Rescue Plan: Mr. Swan stated that he would like to propose to the other Selectmen to resume holding the second monthly Board of Selectmen's meeting at 7:00PM to discuss regular business and to discuss the American Rescue Plan. This meeting would be held as a Zoom meeting so that people who cannot attend the meeting in person would be able to view it remotely. He would like to begin this in September.

Greg Kline made a motion to change the second monthly Board of Selectmen's meeting to 7:00pm, to be held on Zoom, to discuss the American Rescue Plan, as well as other business. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Swan stated that the area First Selectmen and Mayors have been discussing the American Rescue Plan at NECCOG meetings. The American Rescue Plan allows Towns to hire a Program Administrator to help manage the grant. NECCOG has offered to be the Program Administrator to the member Towns. Mr. Swan stated that some Towns have accepted this offer and others are waiting to decide. Mr. Swan stated that he does not want to decide on whether to accept NECCOG's offer until he knows what is in the best interest for the Town of Woodstock.

Mr. Swan stated that the American Rescue Fund was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. Since that time the information received from the federal government on what the grant can be used for and how it is to be administrated has been coming in very quickly and the information has been very fluid. Mr. Swan turned the floor over to Finance Director Karen Fitzpatrick to discuss what information the Town has at this time on the American Rescue Plan.

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the funding for the program is provided by the US Treasury. Because of Woodstock's population size the Town is considered a Non-Entitlement Unit (population less than 50,000.00), and the Town will receive the ARP funds through the Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management, which will act as a pass through for the Federal Government only. Woodstock will receive approximately \$2,325,578.66 from the grant. The first half of \$1,162,789.33 was received in June of this year. The second half will be received approximately in a year. Ms. Fitzpatrick has set up a special revenue account for this money. This account is an interest earning account and the Town can keep the interest that is earned.

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the funds that are received through this grant can be used for any COVID-19 related harm occurring between March 2021 through December 2024. The Town must obligate the use of the funds by December 2024, and they must be spent by December 31, 2026. Any funds not expended by December 31, 2021 must be returned to the US Treasury.

The funds can be used to support the public health response to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, address the negative economic impacts on households, non-profit businesses, small businesses and local tourism and hospitality businesses through loans or grants from the Town. It can be used to replace lost revenue and the Town can use these funds to help support government services that might otherwise be impacted. The funds can also be used for investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure and may be transferred to fire departments, water departments and sewer departments for equipment or upgrades that may be needed to benefit the safety and health of the community.

The grant funds can be used to pay the salary and the benefits for a Program Administrator or Consultant if needed.

The funds cannot be used to pay down unfunded pensions, used as matching funds towards other federal grants, pay down interest or principal on outstanding debts or legal settlements, be placed in a "rainy day" fund or to offset taxes.

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that because of Woodstock designation as a Non-Entitlement Unit, the Town does not fall under the same reporting obligations that larger municipalities do. Woodstock will be required to file reports annually to the US Treasury, beginning October 31, 2021.

Since the law was enacted in March Mr. Swan stated that he and Ms. Fitzpatrick have been working with different state agencies, NECCOG, the auditors, the Town attorney, and other local towns to discuss how to gather information on how to apply for funding, reporting requirements, using consulting services and how best to use the funds.

Mr. Swan has been talking to the Director of Public Works, Woodstock Fire Protection Association President, Fire Marshal, EMS director, Chief Constable, the WPCA chair and TEEG to try to gauge what might be needed in each area, and how to best allocate the funds.

Ms. Fitzpatrick has been providing Auditor Mike VenDeventer of Mahoney Sabol with revenue data to complete the analysis on the Revenue Loss. Once this calculation is completed the Board of Selectmen will begin discussions on uses the funds can be used for.

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that since March she has been attending webinars regarding this grant and on August 9th, she will be attending a reporting training session sponsored by GFOA.

Mr. Swan informed the audience that information on the American Rescue Plan is located on the Town's website Woodstockct.gov. An email account has been created to answer any questions or comments that people may have. That email address is arpa2021@woodstockct.gov.

Mr. Swan and Ms. Fitzpatrick stressed that the plan on how to use these funds does not need to be finalized until December of 2024. The Board of Selectmen want to take the time to carefully study what will benefit the health and safety of the Town residents best. These discussions will take place during the second monthly meeting of the Board of Selectmen starting in September.

One of the things that have been discussed is updating the radio communications to an 800-megahertz range. Mr. Dougherty, President of the Woodstock Fire Protection Association, and the Chair of the Board of Finance, explained that these radios allow for communications across several agencies, not just within Town, QVEC, and area communities, but with the other communities across the State and United States, as well as with the State Police. The radio coverage also eliminates any "dead spots" that are currently an issue with the radios now in use.

Mr. Swan stated that the Woodstock Town Hall is the Town's designated shelter, and the funds can be used to update current systems, such as the HVAC system, to make the building safer and healthier when in use as a shelter.

Mr. Swan opened the floor for discussion.

Suzanne Woodward asked if any funds spent on a project that was over \$100,000.00 would need to go to Referendum. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the Town Attorney will be consulted regarding this issue.

Ms. Woodward also suggested that the decisions on how the monies will be spent should be made by a panel of Town officials and residents. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the grant requirement states that the plan on how the funds will be used must be made by the Selectmen and be voted on by the Board of Selectmen. These plans will be discussed at the second Board of Selectmen's monthly meeting. The Town Attorney will be consulted regarding whether this needs to go to Town Meeting before the Selectmen can vote to approve the plan.

Ms. Woodward asked if the funds could be used to re-open the Town Hall on Friday. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that she believed that the funds can only be used for infrastructure.

Ms. Fitzpatrick assured the audience that the money that has been received is in an interest-bearing money market. Money from this account will be placed in an account designated solely for the grant funds. This account is FDIC insured, and the bank that this account is in is a Massachusetts based bank that is fully insured for all deposit amounts.

Mr. Paquette stated that he feels that it is too soon to create a panel. The information on the ARP is constantly evolving as is the COVID-19 situation. He stated that there is no way to predict what may happen in the future. He stated if the COVID-19 variants continue to evolve rapidly the decision may be made to use the funds towards the pandemic and not towards infrastructure. He feels that the best idea is to plan slowly and thoughtfully.

Anthony Gronski asked what the difference was between a “rainy day” fund and holding on to the grant money for an extended length of time. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that funds in a “rainy day” fund could be used for any unexpected expense, at any time. The funds from the ARP can only be used for COVID-19 expenses and damage and need to be allocated by December 2024 and expended by December 2026.

Mr. Swan and Ms. Fitzpatrick assured that any plan that the Board of Selectmen make will be submitted to the Town Attorney and Auditors before a decision is made.

5. Tax Rebates: None.

6. Correspondence and Announcements: The June activity report from State Police Troop D was received.

Mr. Swan has contacted UCONN regarding portable traffic signs to try to curb speeding in Town. He will be meeting with a representative in September.

The Conservation Commission will be holding a Sustainable Connecticut talk at the Town Hall on August 10, 2021. There is more information on this program on the Town website.

The Senexet Grange has provided a map and a schedule for the “Locally Grown” event that will be held at the Grange and throughout the Town of August 14, 2021. This event is also sponsored by the Woodstock Agricultural Committee and the Woodstock Economic & Development Commission. The Board of Selectmen thank Amy Monahan and her volunteers for their hard work on the event.

The Nature Conservancy is seeking to meet with key town and committee personnel to discuss local land protection planning and show how TNC is identifying and mapping climate resilient sites.

The TEEG Mobile Market will be at the Town Hall on August 19, 2021, from 1:00pm to 2:00pm.

Mr. Swan was proud to announce that Office Manager and Human Resources Manager Crystal Adams has achieved her certification and become a Certified Professional by the Society of Human Resource Management, after months of study and passing a four-hour test.

Mr. Swan stated that the State of Connecticut’s Emergency Services Coordinator has informed the Town that the State of Connecticut Homeland Security Working Group has voted to use a portion on the 2019 Homeland Security Grant funds to purchase 1,710 one-year trial licenses for the Security Mentor training program. Ten licenses will be granted to each town, city, or tribal nation, and invited to attend a training program for cybersecurity. At the end of the year each community will provide feedback to the coordinator.

Woodstock is working on becoming a Heart Safe Community.

7. Public Comments: Amy Monahan, from the Senexet Grange, asked if the Board of Selectmen or any Town officials would be interested in judging the competitions at the Grange Fair on Friday, August 13th, the day before the “Locally Grown” event. Mr. Kline and Ms. Fitzpatrick volunteered. Mr. Swan and Mr. Paquette will let Mrs. Monahan know.

8. Other from Committee: Mr. Swan reiterated that he and the Board of Selectmen want to come up with a thoughtful plan on how to use the funds received from the ARP. Mr. Swan urged the townspeople to attend the second Board of Selectmen’s meeting, via Zoom when the ARP will be discussed virtually. He also urged that people look at the information about the ARP that is posted on the Town website and to use the dedicated email to ask questions or to post comments.

9. Adjournment: Chandler Paquette made a motion to adjourn at 5:20pm. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted
Christine G. French
Recording Secretary