

Minutes of the Waterbury Select Board Special Meeting and Public Hearing
Monday, September 22, 2025 | 12:00 p.m.
28 N. Main Street and via Zoom

Attendance: Alyssa Johnson, Tom Leitz, Cheryl Casey, Dana Allen, Mike Bard, Tori Taravella, Kane Sweeney, Roger Clapp

Public attendance: Skip Flanders, Stanley Morse, Tom Gloor, Valerie Rogers, Bill Shepeluk, Lawrence Dennis, Karen Horne, Doug Greason

Zoom attendance: John Broderick, Wayne Quillan, Mike Dacey, Kathryn Grace, Carrie MacMillan

CALL TO ORDER by A. Johnson, 12:00 p.m.

[Agenda](#)

Motion by T. Taravella to approve the agenda, seconded by K. Sweeney.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

Public comment

None.

[Public Hearings: Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery](#)

[Hearing 1: Woody Avenue planning grant application, \\$300k](#)

Background summary from T. Leitz:

- Better served by a planning grant instead of an implementation grant (the two available options)
- According to HUD rules, we can't deviate from this proposed number by more than 10% without another public hearing.
- Met with Grenier Engineering on Friday to go over the numbers:
 - Approx. \$110k for civil engineering
 - Approx. \$45k for environment and soil analysis, with about 10 bore sites because of how much clay is on the site.
 - Approx. \$15k for soils expert.
 - The remaining goes toward site plans, housing finance, public engagement, market study, and legal.
- Application is due September 30.
- Ultimately, this money will all come from HUD, so the market study is pretty critical.

D. Allen said we are well-positioned for a cut of this CDBG grant money for planning. It looks like more applicants are going for implementation rather than planning grants, so we should have a good shot at the money.

J. Broderick added that planning grant awards will be based on their ability to get the pre-development work done so developers can come in and get units online quickly. There is a 6-year timeline by HUD requirements.

T. Leitz noted that 250 pre-applications were approved, but we're still hopeful.

Discussion

A. Johnson asked for additional background on the site and the basic site planning that has been done leading up to this development grant.

- T. Leitz summarized the benefits and challenges of putting this land toward affordable housing development.
 - A portion of the property is conserved in perpetuity.
 - A good chunk of the land is still available for development.
 - The storage building is being moved downhill as close to High St. as we can so maximize space for development.
 - Agreement with the school for parking needs to be worked out; several concepts are under consideration.
 - The sewer system runs uphill, which poses one of the challenges.
 - There is no match needed for this grant.

K. Sweeney asked about what it means to make the site shovel ready.

- T. Leitz replied that the grant would ensure the town has all the resources to undertake the work that needs to be done for the implementation phase, which is shovel-ready for a developer.

R. Clapp asked if this application was an all-or-nothing proposition, and what the timeframe is.

- T. Leitz said notification should come in December. The state has said they have no desire to fund projects that won't end in housing, so they will fund projects in full if they are confident they will happen.

K. Sweeney asked about how this RFQ would differ from the Stanley Wasson request.

- T. Leitz said this RFQ would be tighter in its specifications, whereas Stanley Wasson is a broad request for concepts. The selectboard and public are in the driver's seat on Woody Ave. concept specifications.

K. Grace asked why this meeting wasn't held at night for more people to attend and weigh in because there are a lot of other possible considerations for how to use this land. It's a crucial piece of land to be building housing on.

- T. Leitz said the timing of the grant deadline and the invitation to apply made for a very strict timeframe for following public hearing requirements. This meeting time and date were The grant application includes money for public engagement to reach out about the kinds of questions she is asking.
- K. Grace added that very few people on Ellinwood Ave. know any of this is taking place. It's such a crowded place, it doesn't make sense to build more on that land.
- C. MacMillan said information is going out after the fact, missing out on key opportunities for public input.
 - K. Grace noted a number of rumors flying around town about the fait accompli of this project.
- D. Allen clarified that the planning grant includes public engagement and evaluation of alternatives. This grant is not for implementation of a project. There is no land sale as part of this as currently envisioned. We are evaluating options for the future, including: what happens with the storage shed and what happens with the preexisting agreement with the school for parking. We would like to know what the best use is for this particular parcel, taking into account all of the things already brought up (traffic, policing, school parking, crowding, etc.). Yes, the timeline is

tight and none of the towns applying for this grant are happy about it, but we did not get the requested extension.

L. Dennis asked for further clarification about the responsibilities of the town and the eventual developer (if the project moves in that direction) and the question of market value.

- T. Leitz said the money originates with HUD, so there has to be a substantial affordability component to the housing that is built. HUD rules automatically consider seniors (65+) financially qualified.

V. Rogers said she thinks there is confusion because there are so many projects going on without visible movement on them. Let's see how 51 S. Main St. works out before getting in the weeds on other projects. What would help the public is a timeline.

- D. Allen, as grant management consultant, said such a timeline or Gantt chart was the intent and would be ideal; however, in this current climate of uncertain funding opportunities and moving targets, such a timeline is very difficult to achieve.
- T. Leitz said working with the federal government on signing contracts and getting the money often doesn't cooperate with timelines.
- R. Clapp agreed that having some kind of schedule would be important to work on, but the possibility of getting \$68m with this grant is exceptional.
- C. Casey said the *Municipal Dispatch* intends to provide a distillation of these projects on a monthly basis, but will also be clear that there is a degree of ambiguity that we all have to accept because of moving pieces that are beyond our control. The information may shift from month to month as a result.

T. Gloor addressed the following:

- Confirmed that planning and implementation, if we get the planning money, must happen within 6 years.
- The selectboard did talk about Woody Ave. at Town Meeting, to its credit, so public engagement needs to start now.
- If we don't get this grant, will the selectboard still move forward with a plan for the site?
 - T. Leitz said yes, moving forward would be on the table if money were found elsewhere.
- What is happening with the storage shed currently there?
 - T. Leitz said they are emptying the shed.

C. MacMillan said the selectboard agreed months ago that the town would go knocking on doors in the Woody Ave. neighborhood to engage with the public.

- T. Leitz said that's what the money is supposed to help us do—like public engagement on steroids.

K. Grace said it feels like the town is moving in the direction of dealing in real estate, rather than using the land for the public good. Housing only benefits those who will live in those units.

[Hearing 2: Randall Meadow implementation grant application. \\$4.25m](#)

Background summary from T. Leitz:

- Roughly 45 acres transferred from the state to Waterbury between Randall St., the Winooski River, and the State Complex.
- The guts of the project is to move about 100,000 cubic yards of fill for flood mitigation, which gives about a foot of flood relief for the immediate neighborhood, extending 7,000. That is huge. Pressure in the sewer system should also be relieved.
- This money will also come from HUD, so it comes with its own set of administrative challenges

- The implementation includes repaving Park St. because moving trucks and fill in and out will do some damage.
- The environmental and archaeological timelines cannot be pinned down precisely; for example, if something is found there will be a delay in the project.

K. Horne said this project is the most effective option we've been able to come up with; from the point of view of mitigation, this is going to be an excellent project. Since the project will affect the state complex, we imagine they will have some interest in its implementation.

Discussion

K. Sweeney asked if we can estimate the time between each major phase of the project.

- T. Leitz said it is possible, depending on how quickly we're given the money.
- K. Horne said the application requires a project timeline, so that is our starting point. In the best of possible worlds, we can't move forward until 2026.

R. Clapp asked how competitive we are in this process.

- D. Allen said they are separating housing projects from mitigation projects, which decreases the pot of money, but our benefit-cost ratio is very high. The optics of this are very good—state land being conveyed to the town to protect against future flood events. This is our biggest, best chance, and we are competitive.

R. Clapp asked for an update for the transfer of title.

- T. Leitz has just received an option from the state that both he and town counsel are comfortable with.

M. Bard asked about contingency if either hazardous materials or indigenous materials onsite.

- T. Leitz said a 5% contingency is built into this budget.
- A. Johnson added that the budget also includes a line item for archaeology.

K. Sweeney spoke to town priorities and flood mitigation is definitely a number one priority, regardless of the order in which these applications were presented today. People had to do a lot of lobbying to get the position of having an option agreement for the Meadow. Getting this grant is the most important thing right now.

L. Dennis asked when we would hear if we were awarded the grant.

- K. Horne answered likely December or early January. He also asked about the hydrology report. D. Allen said we don't have a final survey model at this time because updating the previous studies would be part of this grant funding. L. Dennis asked if this funding would also do any infrastructure work on Randall St. T. Leitz said that was not in the plan but is a good point to consider.

K. Grace said she supports this grant but asked if building a berm could be done to make higher banks and cut down on the trucking.

- K. Sweeney said the trouble with berms is when they break or overflow, they trap the water; there's no way for the water to get back out.
- D. Allen said dredging rivers doesn't get us a whole lot and tends to be a non-starter from a regulatory perspective. You can't dig deep enough to essentially make a difference, and new sediment fills it back in very quickly. The berms would almost certainly directly impact downstream locations. Just by the numbers, berms wouldn't make a good use of the money.

C. MacMillan asked about restoration of Randall Meadow; if it keeps flooding, we'll just have to keep spending money on its restoration.

- T. Leitz said the site would be graded in a manner that would minimize future silt deposits, according to the engineer. Planting of the trees would be to create some natural capacity for additional flood storage using native vegetation. There will be an ongoing maintenance cost for the town. If the site floods after the project is done, that is a valid FEMA expense (75% of the bill).
- K. Sweeney added that the property is supposed to flood by design in order to protect homes, businesses, and roads. Damage from floods on a site that's built to flood is going to be taken into account.
- C. MacMillan urged the selectboard to be very clear about the project being a means of mitigating flood damage, not solving or preventing floods.
 - D. Allen said all of the language about this project has used the term "mitigation," never "solution." The Town has not pushed the latter narrative. The cost of implementing and maintaining the Meadow pales in comparison to dealing with the cost of infrastructure damage.

C. MacMillan followed up with a question about whether this grant can provide money to residents for raising their utilities.

- T. Leitz said we cannot do that with this funding source.
- D. Allen said there are other funding sources that residents have used.
- K. Horne added that the project is using the meadow to protect businesses and residences; that's the mitigation part.

R. Clapp said one of the objectives of Community Resilience in the Waterbury Area (CRew) is to help individual residents with projects like raising utilities.

L. Dennis asked if the property goes back to the state if tons of toxins are found on the site, and clarified that the project would relieve pressure on the stormwater drains and sewage system.

- T. Leitz said that remains to be seen, and yes, the drains would have pressure taken off. Only soil sampling has been done on the site and nothing outrageous was found, but not a full study.

A. Johnson brought the hearings to a close, 1:29 p.m.

[Authorization of resolutions for the CDBG-DR grants](#)

Motion by R. Clapp to sign the resolution authorizing the Town Manager to move forward with the grant application for Woody Avenue as presented; seconded by M. Bard.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

Motion by M. Bard to sign the resolution authorizing the Town Manager to move forward with the grant application for the Randall Meadow site; seconded by T. Taravella.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

A. Johnson thanked everyone for their work to make this tight turnaround.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by T. Taravella to find that premature knowledge of personnel discussions would place the town at a significant disadvantage; seconded by K. Sweeney.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

Motion by R. Clapp to enter executive session, anticipating no further action on the part of the selectboard.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

Executive session entered at 1:34 p.m.

Executive session exited at 2:19 p.m. with no action taken.

ADJOURNMENT, 2:19 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey