

**Town of Waldoboro  
Economic Development Committee  
Municipal Building, 1600 Atlantic Highway or Remotely  
Minutes for Thursday, July 6, 2023**

**1. Call to Order**

7:07 p.m.

Present: Chair Jan Visser, Sonja Sleeper, Patty Fazio, Rueben Mahar, Bob Butler, Jen Merritt (remote), and Town Planner Max Johnstone. Absent: George Seaver, Jon Nicoli, Ann Leamon.

Public: Richard Parker, Rebecca Waddell.

Determination of a quorum.

**2. Adjustments to the agenda**

None.

**3. Citizen Comments**

Deferred to after Wooster Parking Lot discussion.

**4. Approval of Minutes for June 6, 2023**

*Motion to approve minutes by Reuben, seconded by Patty.*

*Motion carried with five affirmative votes and one abstention.*

**5. Chair Report (Jan Visser)**

Jan gave an update on the Waldoboro Food Pantry, including statistics of July 5<sup>th</sup> distribution: 136 families, including seven new, with six from Waldoboro and one from Nobleboro. Individuals were 106 children, 164 adults, and 56 seniors for a total of 326.

WFP received a \$6,000 Bessie Smith Grant to implement a program where all single seniors will get a prepared meal with their distribution. Janet Lee is working with Hannaford on that while also checking other options. The WFP also received a \$9,000 grant from Good Shepherd to buy a commercial freezer.

Jan reminded the committee that WFP has taken over paying for the Miller Kids Weekend Food program from AIO as they can no longer do it for Miller. This will cost WFP \$22,500 for the school year.

The town warrant to give \$18,000 to WFP passed. This equals \$1,500 per month, which is about 25 percent of the cost of the food distributed monthly. It also doesn't offset the new \$22,500 expense for the Miller Kids Weekend Food program.

**6. Town Updates (Max Johnstone)**

a) Planning Board

Max reported a quiet month for the Planning Board. There is a pre-application for a small subdivision on Reef Road for housing. It is an initial concept, nowhere near ready for approval.

There will also be discussion of LD 2003 amendments to the Land Use Ordinance. The changes at the town office are mostly updating definitions and standards in order to comply with the new law. The state has given an extension until July 1, 2024. There won't be a lot of difference unless the town starts discussing short-term rentals, which is a whole other mess.

#### b) Town warrant results

Everything passed including the TIF which should provide \$15,000 or so in revenue.

The aquaculture moratorium also passed, but the town should wait for DMR to give advice to towns that passed such moratoriums. We don't know if they will respect them or say the town doesn't have jurisdiction.

The committee renewed discussion of the Supreme Court's recent ruling redefining wetlands and what impact that may have on the town. Max said the town has maps reflecting the shoreland zone, and that won't be impacted by the SCOTUS ruling won't impact that. What could bring a change is in State DEP rules regarding other wetlands such as Miller Field, which is not in the shoreland zone but has a small stream. The DEP can say you need a setback of 75 feet, even if it isn't in the shoreland zone. How they define wetlands could be impacted by SCOTUS, but so far there aren't rule changes from Maine DEP.

Bob said he was concerned about the ruling because wetland protection is critical in this state and other states. He voiced concerns about the environmental impact of development on forests, wetlands, and that habitat for wildlife is becoming more rare. He suggested proceeding with caution and to really read through the ruling and truly understand it. It shouldn't be looked as something to make it easier to fill wetlands as they are critical filters for maintaining the health of our river, and our river is absolutely essential.

Max said he would check in and see if there are updated maps, but until then there isn't much to change in Waldoboro. He needs more information from the state. Bob suggested that the town map out important wetlands as they are different from the shoreland zone.

## 7. Old Business

#### a) Climate Resilience Partnership

On June 27<sup>th</sup> the select board passed the Town of Waldoboro Community Resilience Resolution. That goes to the state to see if the town will be accepted to be one of the state partners in their resiliency program. Max provided a list of action items at the June meeting, and part of that did include wetlands and having consideration of them in zoning.

Max also asked the select board for approval to apply for a \$50,000 community action grant toward the purchase of the solar array at the transfer station. The total purchase cost is \$164,000 divided over two budget cycles. The buyback period was between seven and eight years, but this would drop it to around five.

There was discussion of what the array powers. The answer is that it powers the town buildings, but not directly. The power goes into the grid, the town buildings take power out of the grid. It's basically a credit on the electric bill. There is more information on the town website.

Sonja suggested that perhaps after the solar farm is paid for the town needs to find ways to generate income other than raising property taxes.

Jan said he would write a letter in support of the grant on behalf of the Economic Development Committee to be submitted with the grant application. Max said that expected the grant decision in a month or two.

*Reuben motioned that the EDC give Jan the authority of the chair to sign a letter in support of the grant. Patty seconded the motion. All in favor, passed unanimously.*

#### b) Aquaculture Moratorium

Discussion tabled until more information from DMR and until George is present.

### 8. New Business

#### a) Wooster Parking Lot/Downtown

The town has completed the purchase of the Wooster Parking Lot behind Community Pharmacy downtown, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre. After town acquisition, Public Works has been in to get rid of invasive knotweed, cut some branches, and improve the appearance of the parking lot.

Max wants to approach it by talking with the property owners first, then going to the public after gaining more insight. What are the needs of the businesses and residents on the Friendship block? Does the tree in the middle have enough sentimental value to reduce the parking by a few spaces? How does the town balance the needs of the businesses and the taxpayer-funded purchase of the lot? There is space for at least 30 parking spaces.

Plans for the parking lot will include paving, striping parking spots, and making sure the pedestrian connection stairs are maintained. Some discussion will be about time limits, and perhaps reserved parking for businesses and residents. Students at UMaine could be asked to draw up a plan, but it would still require an engineering firm to solidify a plan before applying for grants.

Work was done downtown to re-stripe parking spaces, create no-parking zones near the corners at the intersection of Main Street with Friendship Road and Jefferson Street, and crosswalks were also repainted. There are handicapped spots as well as a 1-hour parking time limit on the Friendship block. Those parking longer are encouraged to use the Wooster Parking Lot.

Max walked around with Rob from Pine Tree Engineering to consider curb bump outs and speed tables to try to reduce speed and improve safety downtown. Concerns about bump outs include cars going onto the curb when trying to make the turns as they are already tight.

The speed tables would most likely be at crosswalks, including two on Jefferson Street with one down by Mill Street. There would be one at both ends of the Friendship block. There will be another crosswalk from Broad Bay Church over toward School Street.

## b) Housing

Jan said while the committee didn't talk about housing at this meeting, he wants it to stay in everyone's mind.

Max mentioned that there was also approval to do a water extension study to get town water to the intersection of routes One and 220. This extension would be from Old Route One up past the Historical Society. There was a study to bring business to the intersection of Route One and 235, but that was cut short by finding a lot of ledges near Route 235.

Sonja turned the discussion back to affordable housing by pointing out that someone making \$36,000 a year should only pay about \$692/month in rent, which is unlikely around here – it should be the equivalent of one week's salary. She said we need to consider what kind of town we want. Currently, we have artisan communities, communes, and organic farms, but not much in the way of creating jobs that pay even \$36,000. She said the committee needs to think outside the box, figure out what is affordable, and whether people who live here are self-employed or work elsewhere.

Jen explained that over the past 20 years Waldoboro has lost a lot of its major employers. They didn't pay huge sums of money, but Waldoboro has quite a history of having business here and there. There technically aren't large employers anymore, but there are businesses. We need to attract larger employers who can pay better wages. She also pointed out that the one week of income seems to be getting revised upward and only one county in the state has a median income where a person can afford a median-priced home.

Sonja pointed to outside influences such as people selling a home for \$1 million in California and buying a home here with cash, which challenges the housing market.

There are no easy answers, but the committee should continue to brainstorm.

## 9. Comments from the Committee or the Public

Richard Parker asked how much the Wooster Parking Lot cost the town. Max replied the town voted to spend up to \$75,000. Richard asked about additional costs that might be associated with developing the lot and Max replied it would be \$15,000 to get an engineering study, and then the town would look for federal grants to cover as much of the expenses as possible. Max said that most of that would be next year, but that the maintenance costs now are not that much since Public Works is doing it. Jan noted that the committee felt strongly that the town needed to buy that property and Max did some pretty masterful work to make that happen.

## 10. Adjourn

8:05 p.m.