

Minutes of the Waterbury Select Board
Monday, May 5, 2025 | 6:30 p.m.
Waterbury Fire Station and via Zoom

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

Public: ORCA Media, Chris Viens, Lisa Walton, Harry Shepard, Tom Gloor, Cheryl Gloor, Marie Gervais, Al Lewis, Sandy Lewis, Martha Staskus, Sandy Sabin, Lisa Scagliotti, Pete Martell, Billy Vigdor, Evan Hoffman, Bob Finacune, Beth-Ann Maier, Carolyn Fox, Mike Hedges, Tom Knight (VTrans), Phil Harrington (VTrans), Sophia Schintzel (VTrans)

Zoom: ORCA Media, Diane, Lucie Roy, Delia Makhetha, Chris Pazienza, Amy, Tim, Bill April, Joan, John Ritter, Bob Hammerl, Jason Rouse, Brandon Dunn, Lisa, Gretchen King, CD, Dennis Scannell, Jeanne, Megan Gould, Amy Marshall-Carney, Wayne Quillin, Bradley, John Zimmerman, Michael Paddock, Rachel Lavalley, Chris Eaton, Laura Putnam, Rob Buck, Bette Lewicke, Mal Culbertson, Sarah, Dustin Spence, C. Hughson, Maggie McGlynn, Mahendra Thilliyar (VTrans)

CALL TO ORDER by A. Johnson at 6:31 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the [agenda](#) as written: seconded by M. Bard.

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

VTrans Public Information Presentation ([presentation slides](#) included in meeting docs)

S. Schintzel gave an overview of the presentation agenda.

T. Knight provided a summary of the project history and an overview of the project to come:

- The bridge was originally constructed in 1928. The current structure has a safety rating of “fair,” which is the point at which repairs are warranted.
- The project expects to improve the turning geometry at two intersections - Lincoln Street and Route 100.
- New roadway specifications: 32-foot roadway, 4-foot shoulders, and 5-foot sidewalks. There will also be a new right-hand turn lane onto Rt 100 from Stowe Street and the sidewalk will be relocated to the other side of the structure.
- Overall project cost is \$4.3m, with the construction costing \$3.4m

P. Harrington reviewed the construction schedule and logistics.

- The Park and Ride will be temporarily relocated during the first week of June to Stanley Wasson Hall.
- Stowe Street will be closed from North Street to Route 100 approximately June 16, no later than the end of June, by contractual obligation. Closure is planned for 60 days.
- At some point during this 60-day period, Lincoln St. will also be closed for up to 21 consecutive days, 24 hours a day. The exact timing of this closure is flexible and will depend on project progress.
- There will be limited access to these roadways during the closures, including to pedestrians and bikes. There will be an on-demand shuttle service for those on the road that typically walk downtown; Town Manager can be contacted to request the shuttle.
- Presentation slides include maps of the detours during closures.

S. Schnitzel reviewed how to sign up for construction updates and direct questions to her.

Discussion

A. Lewis asked about plans with the Town for emergency access during closures.

- T. Knight confirmed there has been communication with emergency services about how the response time would be affected; additionally, he can check back with the ambulance service now that they have moved to Main St. from Waterbury Center, changing the response route.

Several attendees asked questions about why Lincoln Street needed to be closed, why the period of closure was longer than earlier stated, and the effects of the closure. P. Harrington gave the following clarifications:

- The means of construction include a large excavator and a large crane for dropping pieces into place. Closing Lincoln St. is necessary for the logistics of managing equipment and materials.
- The closure is expected to be necessary for a week, but the contract allows for up to 21 days to account for unanticipated circumstances.
- The contract does not include incentives for completing the work earlier, only disincentives.
- The light at Guptil Road should automatically adjust to increased traffic caused by the Lincoln St. detour because it is a smart light.
- First responders living on Lincoln Street will have to take the detour(s) to get to the fire station.
- The Town is responsible for addressing traffic issues along each of the detours.
- There is no contractual provision for a pedestrian walkway on Lincoln St. while it is closed.

T. Knight addressed a request for more information about the sidewalk plan:

- There is a plan to take the sidewalk up Rt. 100N, but it is a separate project to be addressed after the bridge project is complete.
- For the current project, signal buttons will be installed to cross Rt. 100 to Blush Hill Road and the sidewalk will go north to the grocery light.

A. Lewis if the final design plans were available for members of the public to look at. T. Knight confirmed the plans are available via a link on the [project fact sheet](#).

A. Lewis pointed out that the traffic light at the Rt 100/Stowe St. intersection causes traffic backups on Stowe Street so that drivers cannot turn onto or out of Lincoln Street; there should be a stop zone painted on the pavement to facilitate the turns rather than a sign prohibiting blocking the intersection. He expressed concerns about safety. T. Knight replied that there aren't plans for pavement markings or signs, but the queuing issues should be alleviated by the right-hand turn lane. If the line of traffic continues to be a problem, it can be addressed.

P. Harrington addressed a question from online about moving the sewer:

- It will be relocated before the road is closed and hooked up to bypass pumps.
- Once the project is in its final stages, the sewer will then be placed into its permanent position.

C. Viens asked what the above-surface footings will be set on, and where the debris will go. P. Harrington responded:

- The footings will be set on bedrock, but the subfooting will be brought up pretty high because the bedrock isn't level.
- The soil is classified as urban background, a general classification. Therefore, all excavation material must be reused on-site or disposed of at an approved site; in this case, extra debris will be put on the I-89 ledge cut, which still has remaining space.

H. Shepard asked more about the materials to be used. P. Harrington said concrete for the first ~2ft, then a steel rail. There is also a decorative panel on the inside face.

R. Clapp asked about contingency plans in the event of a big storm during construction. P. Harrington said they don't believe that particular location is vulnerable in such an event.

T. Knight addressed a concern about visibility when turning left onto Stowe St. from Lincoln St. and said the new geometry will allow drivers to pull up more perpendicular and the visibility around the corner will be better.

Several concerns were raised about possible blasting.

- P. Harrington said they didn't anticipate having to blast because they aren't going down very far—only just past the weathered rock. He assured that the typical procedures for notifying residents would kick in if blasting needed to be done.

- T. Knight acknowledged that there is one corner of the abutment that is an unknown, and they have to see what it's that spot.

C. Viens noted that after three years of the Main St. reconstruction, this closure is a blip.

T. Leitz noted that the state took over the cost of the whole project, as long as the Town flags the detour.

Additional questions from online:

- What is the process for getting this project approved? T. Knight said the bridge has been studied for quite some time, but getting funding is a matter of prioritization.
 - The regional planning commission creates a list of projects, and town projects move up and down the list according to how quickly things are deteriorating.
 - H. Shepard added that many bridges across the state have low grading postings, and it's really important that these projects happen, however inconvenient.
- What accommodations are being made for school bus routes, and why couldn't the project begin two days later when school is officially out? T. Knight and P. Harrington said the plan was to begin once school let out, but maybe snow days shifted the calendar.
- How will the bridge be removed? P. Harrington said it will be taken apart in about 8 pieces.
- Can the shuttle information be explained? T. Leitz responded that the plan is to have an on-demand shuttle; a brief study of pedestrian traffic on that bridge suggested that shuttle use might not be heavy.
- Will there be a bike lane for cyclists coming up Stowe Street? T. Knight acknowledged there will not be a dedicated bike lane, but there will be a striped 4-ft shoulder.

Approval of consent agenda

Motion by R. Clapp to approve the consent agenda as written; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Public comment

C. Gloor asked the select board to consider allocating LOT funds for better lighting on Stowe Street, with concern about perceived shenanigans at the park in particular.

M. Hedges said there is definitely an increase in graffiti along Stowe Street and other places in town, for example the dry bridge over Stowe Street, all the way up the street on telephone poles, and on the utility boxes in town.

T. Gloor added that there's graffiti and then there is art—if there is an ability to capture the specific tags that are consistently showing up in town, that might be helpful.

Housing development at the former Stanley Wasson site

A. Johnson provided a framework, noting there are no immediate plans for the site except to make the parking lot a temporary park and ride during the Stowe St. bridge reconstruction. The state still owns the lot. The select board in 2023 voted its interest in pursuing discussion with the state about purchasing the property for housing. The town now has an option, but nothing locked in for purchasing. This discussion is a first step in gathering community feedback about what to do with the property if the Town purchases it.

T. Leitz said having the option cost \$500 to have the option, and was approved by the State. The purchase itself would be \$400,000, which would be hopefully offset by selling it to a developer. The site is already set up for water/sewer.

Discussion

M. Staskus asked how long the option is for. T. Leitz said the option is for 6 months but it can be extended as long as needed, adding:

- That site has been included in the designated downtown, meaning it is exempt from Act 250.
- It is as development-ready as it can be in the state of Vermont.

C. Viens asked what type of housing might be constructed there, and what type of return on investment would it yield. He wants to make sure the town sees a positive outcome from how we're developing, not just costing the taxpayers more money down the road. T. Leitz responded:

- The goals are either to maximize the grand list or develop affordable housing.
- Sidewalks, a crosswalk, maybe a pocket park could be added on a fairly-sized lot.
- For affordable housing, those projects have a 3-5 year lead time, and it is probable that the funding sources aren't the same as they were a few months back. If there is an affordable component to developing the site, it's not going to play out the same as it did with 51 S. Main St., for example.
- Sometimes there needs to be a big public investment, but hopefully Waterbury can avoid that because it is a strong market.
- The TIFF program as it exists would require a bigger district; it isn't currently parcel-based.

P. Martell expressed concerns about the flooding in that area and putting good money after bad. In general, maybe we should be moving a bit further away from the river. Especially with cuts to FEMA, higher ground might be a better idea.

M. Culbertson asked how big the site is, in comparison to 51 S. Main. She is keen on the idea of doing another affordable housing project, something a little more dense than single-family lots. T. Leitz reported the site is 2.4 acres compared to 3/10 of an acre at 51 S. Main.

J. Camaratta acknowledged that the discussions about affordable housing on the housing task force have mostly focused on rentals, but home ownership is also important.

- The median affordable budget is about \$100,000 less than the median home price.
- Starter homes to get people into home ownership would be great.

B. Vigdor said we don't have too many opportunities in town to build to scale, but this site is one of those sites.

- Building for density on this site might be the chance we need to have a material impact on housing.
- We should also think very hard about what we mean by "affordability." The term is relative and what is the threshold that still meets the goals of the town.
- The site is also in the design review district, so dense housing might be flagged by the community for opposition.

C. Gloor expressed concern about a big tenement-style building being constructed there.

- If not single-family homes, she would like to see at least single-family-appropriate housing rather than another Downstreet building.
- "Affordable" and "low-income" aren't synonymous.

T. Gloor asked about the process moving forward.

- T. Leitz said he would expect at least a year before there is something concrete to bring to the select board and the community.
- T. Gloor added that there is a sweet spot for starter homes and supports J. Camaratta's suggestion on this point. Let's also make sure we're not oversaturating one market at the cost of another.
- E. Hoffman expressed additional support for starter homes, including tiny houses, so that more people can seriously think about home ownership instead of renting forever.

M. Hedges said we might not need to bring more people into town, but there are people already in town who can't afford to stay as they age, experience mobility issues, downsize, etc.

B. Finucane noted how much debate has already gone into what affordable housing is and when it came to the 51 S. Main St. site, people really showed up to vote in favor of affordable housing. It's a crucial issue and he's in favor of it, even though he'll be able to see such a building from his house on Randall St.

C. Viens said he looked into how the new development in Morrisville has brought returns to the taxpayers and was unimpressed.

- Now that the town is more congested, people don't want to spend any more money on anything
- Town budgets are difficult to pass.

B. Maier said we should look at this issue as citizens of the state as well as citizens of the town.

- What's driving our expenses as a state are education, health care, corrections, and homelessness. Putting people in homes reduces all of those costs, which we bear as citizens of the state.
- Decisions like this for our town help the costs we help pay for the state.

H. Shepard acknowledged he is struggling to understand what we can do as a town to really make a difference with this issue; he's not sure how we pay for it because property taxes are a serious burden and need to be factored in.

T. Gloor asked if there is the possibility of subletting the Stanley Wasson lot, or if selling it for some purpose was the only option. T. Leitz said subletting was a possibility for consideration.

K. Sweeney said when he thinks of this lot in particular, he doesn't think of starter homes because it is in the flood plain. But multi-unit homes or apartments are optimal for this spot because the livable space usually starts one floor up.

M. Bard said all proposals need to be considered and weighed for their benefits and drawbacks.

- A well-designed project can enhance the community.
- Development in the next few years is changing because of the political climate; we'll just have to understand the options and what suits our community best.

Municipal and regional Board and Commission and other appointments

Housing Task Force–

Motion by R. Clapp to nominate Em Lamson to a one-year term on the Housing Task Force; seconded by T. Taravella.

No further discussion; **motion approved 4-0 with 1 (A. Johnson) abstention.**

Tree Board–

Motion by R. Clapp to nominate Mike Loschiavo to a one-year term as Tree Commissioner; seconded by M. Bard.

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

Animal Control Officer–

Motion by K. Sweeney to reappoint T. Leitz as animal control officer; seconded by R. Clapp.

- T. Leitz said please register your dogs.

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

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission–

Motion by K. Sweeney to reappoint D. Greason as our representative on the regional planning commission; seconded by T. Taravella.

No further discussion; **motion approved unanimously**

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Transportation Advisory Committee Member–

Previously serving member interested in serving again: Mike Hedges.

Interested in serving as an alternate: Doug Greason

- M. Hedges said he has enjoyed serving the town in this capacity; however, some towns aren't appointing people and they don't achieve quorums in order to do the work. The Committee is working to address this issue.

Motion by R. Clapp to nominate M. Hedges as Waterbury's advisory member to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Transportation Committee; seconded by T. Taravella.

Friendly amendment by T. Taravella to add D. Greason as the alternate; amendment accepted by R. Clapp.

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

Mad River Valley Resource Management Alliance Board Member–

Previously serving member interested in serving again: Alec Tuscany

Motion by M. Bard to reappoint Alec Tuscany as the Waterbury representative to the Mad River Valley Resource Management Alliance Board.; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

NEKCV Fiber Governing Board Delegate–

Previously serving member interested in serving again: Christopher Shenk

Motion by T. Taravella to appoint Christopher Shenk as the Waterbury delegate to the NEKCV Fiber Governing Board; seconded by K. Sweeney.

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

Flood mitigation and FEMA buyout updates & Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program

T. Leitz on FEMA buyouts:

- We have amounts for the first time, so property owners can make their decisions. Three properties are moving forward.
- 35 N. Main St., 21 Elm St. and 1930 Route 2 were all approved this week for buyout. It will likely be a solid 3 months before the appraisals are done and provided to the owners.
- For the other three, closings will probably happen in the next 3-6 months, with demolition in 2026.

T. Leitz on Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program:

- This program administered by the National Parks Service gives technical assistance in the form of federal government staff who can help with future visioning of the Randall Meadow, through the frameworks of recreation and conservation.
- It costs nothing to enroll in the program and the assistance itself also comes at no cost.
- The perspective could be valuable to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the Randall Meadow.

Discussion

A. Johnson asked how long property owners have to decide on the FEMA appraisals. T. Leitz said three months.

H. Shepard asked who would take ownership of the properties. T. Leitz said ultimately the town, and these properties would then be open spaces in perpetuity.

- There could be an interesting community conversation about what might happen on these sites. They could become recreation/green space assets.
- Impervious surfaces won't be allowed on these properties—that's the trade-off of participating in this FEMA buyout program.
- A. Johnson added that there is currently a bill under consideration in the legislature that accounts for the loss of tax income when these lots are taken off the grand list.

T. Gloor asked who would pay for the demolition. T. Leitz said that unlike after Irene, the state will pay this time.

C. Viens said if we can turn the Stanley Wasson space into a liveable area, that offsets the loss of the lots in the flood zone below.

Motion by R. Clapp that the town manager register Waterbury in the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Other grant updates: Municipal Planning grant, Downtown Transportation Fund, and Better Connections Program

Downtown Transportation Fund–

- T. Leitz said he received notice last Friday that Waterbury will be awarded the grant, which will be used to pay for paving Bidwell, adding sidewalks and a speed hump.

- Probably no construction action this season.

Better Connections Program grant for Waterbury Center–

- T. Leitz reported that \$97,500 was awarded, and there is a matching obligation.
- Duncan MacDougall is working on a plan for raising the matching funds. T. Leitz will announce the kickoff when that plan is finalized.

Municipal Planning grant–

- T. Leitz explained that built into the budget was an assumption that Waterbury would receive this \$30,000 grant to support the Conservation Commission in its work related to the town plan, while \$50,000 of the LOT money would be given to the Planning Commission for someone to manage the Town Plan project.
 - Waterbury's application for the grant was rejected.
 - The new town plan is a priority, so the Planning Commission will still receive the \$50k.
- B. Vigdor asked if there was a reason given for why Waterbury was rejected for the municipal planning grant. T. Leitz said he hasn't had that conversation yet but the state has not been very supportive lately of funding town plan updates.

Follow up conversation re: Selectboard recommendations for school board appointment and ethics concerns

A. Johnson summarized the issue and framed the discussion:

- The select board made two recommendations to the school board on candidates for the two vacant Waterbury positions.
- The school board elected one of those candidates recommended, but did not discuss the other candidate.
- A third candidate was recommended by Waterbury select board member T. Taravella at the school board meeting. T. Taravella did not disclose her role as a select board member, only a former school board member.
- A formal ethics complaint form has not yet been submitted but the issue has come up in public comment.

T. Leitz said he has spoken to the town attorney about the matter.

- He noted the town hasn't yet formally adopted the procedures for dealing with ethics complaints as they arise, but he has been designated as the ethics complaints officer.
- The conflict of interest definition is given in state ordinance, effective January 1, 2025, and so the concern about conflicts of interest have to align with the legal definition in the statute. Another key consideration in determining conflicts of interest is whether one person's interest is greater than another.
- There are also procedures pertaining to specific infractions that people should read before making an allegation.
 - A conflict or appearance should be determined by someone with knowledge of the relevant facts and the relevant statutes/policies.
 - Actual prohibited conduct is fairly cut-and-dry.
 - For municipal officials, the conduct is only pertinent with respect to official duties.
- The town's conflict of interest policy has a much more expansive definition of conflict of interest, which is an important distinction to make. It's stronger than the state's law.
- An upcoming agenda item for the select board is the procedures for filing a complaint and undertaking the investigation.
 - He recommended that those filing complaints should attach their names, not file anonymously.
 - Also, we shouldn't accept complaints that don't specifically cite the area of policy and law that was violated.

T. Taravella apologized for any confusion her actions may have caused and will be more careful and diligent in revealing her roles in the future.

Discussion

C. Gloor asked how often the policy is reviewed. T. Leitz noted policies are readopted annually.

C. Viens acknowledged he's had time to think and calm down, but he is still upset.

- His question for T. Leitz is, if he were to file the paperwork, should he wait until the rest of the process is ironed out.
- There is a portion of the population that feels slighted by a select board member after the select board advanced its recommendations; board members' votes were also slighted. The school board members also don't come out of this with clean hands, and he hopes the voters consider this situation at the next election.
- T. Leitz said the paperwork can be filed tonight if C. Viens so chose.
- C. Viens will talk further with T. Leitz about the matter of filing paperwork.

L. Walton noted a lot of people in the community have been talking about this issue and some formal complaints might be lodged.

- We hold our elected officials to a higher standard, and this situation should not have been confusing.
- She hopes to see better from our select board.

T. Gloor emphasized the importance of trust and how crucial it is that the public trust this board.

- Part of that has to be self-policing as a board.
- He encouraged the board to talk with the school board chair about a way forward with regard to trust.
- T. Leitz talked to the HUUSD superintendent, who said the school board is also deeply uncomfortable about making appointments.
 - Waterbury representatives have been routinely appointed rather than elected, if anyone is found to fill the seats at all
 - There might be a broader conversation about the underlying issue that 4 seats for Waterbury is too many.

T. Gloor said the big foul was whether all candidates - or at least recommendations - were considered.

M. Culbertson commented that the policy is clear and some of the reaction feels outsized. She encouraged the board to review any complaints that come in within the definitions of our policy and otherwise not get bogged down in issues adjudicated under the policy.

S. Sabin reminded that just because someone can do something, doesn't mean they should. The perception matters and she hopes the board learned from this situation.

C. Viens spoke to one of our state representatives about this issue, who said that in the past, appointees were determined by the select board. The same scenario can still happen once redistricting takes place.

Selectboard and municipal manager informational updates

R. Clapp—

- Recreation committee met last week and talked about the proposed recreation building, bringing the new committee members up to speed. They are looking at a scaled-down version of what Colchester built for their rec facility.
- May 17, 1pm - 3pm, is the community volunteer fair at Brookside Primary School, organized by Rec. Department and Revitalizing Waterbury. 25 volunteer organizations will be represented there.

T. Taravella—

- The Tree Board met to discuss the emerald ash borer problem, particularly the costs and benefits of immunizing trees, which is very expensive, versus taking down the trees if infected (also expensive). There's probably more trees infected in the back roads, so they're working on a plan.
- May 24 is Arbor Day and at 1pm outside of the library there will be a tree planting in memory of Steve Lotspiech.

K. Sweeney—The natural disaster preparedness committee had its first meeting with the new coordinator, Dani Kehlmann. Mostly information sharing. Does not foresee any requests to the select board in the next few meetings.

M. Bard—no updates.

T. Leitz—

- The first quarter LOT funds have been received, totaling \$201,000. Nothing indicates we're yet seeing decline in tourism.
- He met with some state officials and Lamoille Housing Partnership, who is working with the state to operate a shelter at the armory. It is a good thing to have a local nonprofit with a good record of operation instead of an organization or contractor from out of state taking on the shelter operations. They will apply for a zoning permit in the next month to be in operation this winter.

Discussion

- R. Clapp inquired if there has been any change in occupancy. T. Leitz reported that occupancy is winding down but not to zero yet.
- S. Sabin asked about distribution of LOT from the Flood Bill. T. Leitz explained that if the surplus is allocated back to towns, we won't see much because our participation in the LOT program is so new.
- H. Shepard asked how things have gone with the operation of the homeless shelter. T. Leitz said it has gone very well; neither he or the select board have received a single complaint. It wouldn't surprise him if Lamoille Housing Partnership tried to make it a year-round shelter.
- M. Bard asked about planned municipal parking in the Methodist Church parking lot. T. Leitz said the formal agreement hasn't been signed.

Next meeting agenda

- Adoption of the formal ethics complaint procedures.
- Housing program proposals from the housing task force.
- K. Sweeney will present on policing expenses.
- M. Bard will discuss the NQID permit and safety plan.
- R. Clapp suggested another invitation be extended to VSP. T. Leitz said he learned that the barracks are getting a larger number of new recruits than in past years, along with some transfers, so that is promising for the staffing concerns.
- R. Clapp suggested we follow up on town meeting discussions about creative options for town meetings. A. Johnson has some information to share from her research on town meeting formats.
- For the parking lot: paving, sidewalks

Motion by K. Sweeney to find that premature public knowledge of real estate discussions would put the Town of Waterbury at a substantial disadvantage; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Motion by K. Sweeney to move to executive session; seconded by R. Clapp.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Select Board entered executive session at 9:08 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey.