

Minutes of the Waterbury Select Board
Monday, August 18, 2025 | 6:30 p.m.
28 N. Main Street and via Zoom

Attendance: Tom Leitz, Kane Sweeney, Mike Bard, Alyssa Johnson, Roger Clapp

Public attendance: ORCA Media, Sandy Sabin, Harry Shepard, Dan Sweet, Chris Viens

Zoom attendance: ORCA Media, Anne Imhoff, Dana Allen, Ian Shea, Billy Vigdor

CALL TO ORDER by A. Johnson, 6:30 p.m.

Agendas

Meeting agenda

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the meeting agenda as written; seconded by R. Clapp.

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

Consent agenda

Motion by M. Bard to approve the consent agenda as presented; seconded by K. Sweeney.

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

Public Comment

S. Sabin asked whether the Town can move forward on the Stanley Wasson site without a public vote.

- A. Johnson first acknowledged that at present, the project is in the Request for Proposal stage; proposals from potential developers are due at the end of September.
- T. Leitz said the selectboard has legal authority to buy and sell property; further, the RFP that has been publicized was reviewed at several selectboard meetings, where public comment on the language was offered and taken into account. The selectboard has so far been including public input along the way.

H. Shepard offered comments on [the request](#), clarifying that it is actually an RFQ [Request for Qualifications].

- He asked T. Leitz about some of the language in the second paragraph that implies a two-phase project.
 - T. Leitz responded that the language was crafted to be broad enough to allow for recommendations from the housing development perspective.
 - Multifamily affordable units are projects that take much longer to put together, according to experts in the affordable housing field; given the current federal environment, that's even more true than ever. If there is going to be an affordable component, it will necessitate a phase two.
- H. Shepard then noted that the document sounds more like an RFP because of the deliverables listed.

- T. Leitz agreed that the request is a lot to ask and calls for developers to put in the effort. Barre City put out something similar, and other communities put out their own versions; these examples were used to inform this request so that using a consultant to develop an RFP could be avoided.
- H. Shepard's last question was about the scope of the Town's involvement in serving as a conduit for project funding.
 - T. Leitz said at this time, yes.
 - M. Bard added that their intent was to give potential developers enough scope so they can bring their own creativity and expertise to the project that will be attractive to the community.
 - H. Shepard cautioned that the scope of the deliverables is wide and the selectboard should consider carefully that what is proposed is doable.
- A. Johnson additionally acknowledged her error in previously calling the request an RFP, and the actual request is accurately labeled.

A. Johnson, speaking as a member of the public, expressed how great it was that the Waterbury Public Library released a rare white monarch butterfly. She thanked L. Scagliotti of the *Waterbury Roundabout* for getting the word out.

Reappraisal Update

D. Sweet reported that the town is sending letters this coming week to the northwest part of town, then working their way down, returning back up to Waterbury Center and down from the northeast part of town. The letter addresses some FAQs and requests property owners call to schedule an inspection.

Discussion

- R. Clapp asked if a property owner opted to refuse. D. Sweet said a refusal is their right and the assessment will have to be an estimate; they can grieve the assessment afterwards if they want, but a home visit will then be necessary to correct the assessment.
- M. Bard asked how many properties grieved the assessment last time.
 - D. Sweet estimated 150, and maybe up to a dozen that wound up going to the BCA.
 - T. Leitz said if 150 parcels grieve the assessment, that makes about 6%, which is typical.
- T. Leitz asked if the CLA will be 100 the first year. D. Sweet replied that it should be a little better, around 110, if the market continues to increase as it has.
- T. Leitz reminded the board that there is a reappraisal fund to bring in part-time people for the process.
- R. Clapp asked if there was any risk of us getting out in front of other towns to get a higher task assessment relative to other towns with regards to the education tax. D. Sweet said there's no down side.
- M. Bard asked if there is a period of time from which property owners can select to schedule a visit. D. Sweet said there will be opportunities to schedule a visit between September 1 of this year and the end of 2026.
- C. Viens read a short letter he received from a client, which explained that this year's property tax bill halted them from continuing a landscaping project and even made them question whether it was worth keeping the house. C. Viens said he is hearing similar sentiments more and more often,

and the mere possibility that increased property values might result in increased taxes is scaring people a lot. He also has those fears and worries about what will happen in the future.

- D. Sweet acknowledged that good or bad, the state mandates that our property values align with fair market rate and this process must be undertaken. Financing education is the biggest driver of the cost, but this is also the system in place for financing municipal operations.
- A. Johnson reminded that Waterbury doesn't have an option - there is no choice to legally opt out.
- T. Leitz said the State is undertaking a study about possibly taking over the process. He also pointed out the frequent confusion about homestead status and how new residents tend not to be aware of that requirement.
- T. Leitz said the webpage will go live in the morning and there is an internal calendar that will allow any of the office staff to add an appointment even if D. Sweet is not in the office at that moment. People can make appointments whether or not they are located specifically in the zone of focus at that time.

Flood Mitigation Updates

T. Leitz first updated about the Community Development Block Grant application. He submitted 4 pre-applications and was encouraged to complete 3 full applications.

- The pre-application that was rejected was for the Stanley Wasson site, and the logic was that the grant is HUD money; since that project will only get to the low-moderate income eligibility component in the second phase of the project, it wasn't the strongest application for the specifically pot of funds.
- Waterbury isn't a low-moderate income community overall; however, we were invited to submit for the Randall Meadow project. The census tract associated with the meadow is categorized as low-moderate income, so that increases the chances of the project receiving some funding.
- The Waterbury-specific hydrology study was also accepted for full application. The state's initial reluctance about potential overlap with a Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission application was quelled by the very specific projects, including Randall Meadow, that need good data to be successful, and such data will not necessarily come out of the broader hydrology study that CVRPC is pursuing. The state ultimately recommended the project be added to CVRPC's application, and they agreed to include it. CVRPC will also do the work of putting the full application together for a hydrology study that includes the Waterbury-specific piece.
- The final project is Woody Avenue. The state raised the concern of the 5-year timeline to spend the funds if awarded; T. Leitz did not see the concern as valid. The other issue is the low-moderate income component. If the project is granted funds, we must adhere to the parameters of the grant. According to the rules, senior housing is automatically considered low-moderate income, which gives some ideas for how to develop that site.
- D. Allen is researching a grant that might allow for hiring a grant writer for these applications, which the state acknowledged were an extremely heavy lift. This grant in particular comes with a lot of administrative requirements that might exceed the bandwidth and capabilities of the office staff; money is built in for administration and it will be worth making sure we have the right capacity to manage the grant.

Discussion

K. Sweeney asked if Randall Meadow is under town ownership yet.

- T. Leitz said not yet, but we should get that done soon and he might soon come to the selectboard to approve assistance for finding the necessary funding for the project.
- The National Parks Service will be touring the site this coming week to help in the visioning piece for the site.
- A committee of the CVRPC had a meeting to focus on some improved mapping techniques and he will send the meeting link to the selectboard for review.

A. Johnson asked about the timeline for the grant.

- T. Leitz answered that full applications are due September 30, and there is a public hearing requirement. If there is a second round of available funds, applications are due in December.

K. Sweeney asked whether the state advised us to submit applications without data from Thatcher and Graves Brooks.

- T. Leitz replied that the state's recommendations came after they met with the CVRPC about their application and determined that the application is stronger if the two projects become one, with several components (one being the Waterbury-specific project).
- The recommendation also came from a place of awareness of the burden of completing the application; in this case, CVRPC will do the heavy lifting for us, which is good because they are a strong community partner and will do our application and grant administration appropriate attention.

R. Clapp asked if there is any advantage to getting started on these lengthy applications earlier, given the due date, and if the LOT money would be an appropriate place from which to pull the \$7,500 matching funds to hire a grant writer.

- T. Leitz said yes and yes.

A. Johnson supported R. Clapp's recommendation for getting started as soon as possible and asked if T. Leitz had a proposal and request for a grant writer.

- T. Leitz said he isn't prepared to proceed to that step tonight but might ask for a special meeting as he takes this week to organize the specs.
- D. Allen confirmed that we have a very strong chance of receiving the funding from the Rural Development Economic Initiative if we provide the matching funds.

H. Shepard thanked T. Leitz for pursuing the grants and whether the hydrology study gave enough information to predict the likely success of the Randall Meadow project.

- T. Leitz said yes, we have meaningful data to inform this project.
- D. Allen added that the additional design would include refinement of the data, meaning updated data and better modeling. He also clarified that the townwide study (included in the CVRPC grant application) will further our progress in flood mitigation.

Conveyance of property at 40 Union Street

[\[FEMA buyout memo and recommended motion\]](#)

T. Leitz admitted surprise after something of a black hole on working with FEMA, and suddenly an email came from them stating the property is ready to close. Demolition is hopefully going to be done in about 3 months, but the State is bidding it out and we have to go by their timeline because they cover that part. The four bottom houses on Union St. were all approved for buyouts; if we get additional clarity on the other three, it would be good to have a public meeting about what to do with that collection of parcels.

Motion by R. Clapp for the Town to accept the conveyance of the property at 40 Union Street through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant program and to authorize the Town Manager and Town Attorney David Rugh to execute any and all documents needed to close on the conveyance; seconded by T. Taravella.

Discussion

A. Johnson reminded that the parcel will need to be green space in perpetuity and all necessary funds are coming from FEMA and/or the State for the conveyance and subsequent demolition.

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

Preliminary discussion and review of revised special events permit

T. Taravella presented her [first draft](#) for consideration and revision.

Discussion

- T. Leitz said the struggle has been to review applications, but not an ordinance problem; thus, we don't necessarily need to review the ordinance.
- T. Taravella acknowledged the goal was to ensure we're not missing anything for the first time an application fills out the form.
- T. Leitz suggested there be a note about there being a trigger for State permit if attendance is over 2,000.
- K. Sweeney suggested there are redundancies in "type of entertainment."
- T. Leitz suggested there also be a note about ensuring the event is in compliance with zoning laws.
- T. Taravella also asked if there should be a place where the applicant can confirm they reviewed the event with the fire chief.
 - K. Sweeney and T. Leitz both said yes.
 - R. Clapp said only certain kinds of events need fire chief input—road closure, for example.
- T. Leitz asked if the selectboard wants any criteria included for having a police and/or private security presence.
 - K. Sweeney said 100 attendees at any one time should require a security presence.
 - T. Leitz asked if there was a line where a police presence specifically would be required.
 - T. Taravella said strong recommendations can also be included in the security plan instructions, rather than a requirement.
 - M. Bard said it's usually events that have alcohol that have a security or police presence.
 - K. Sweeney said the town can require security for events serving alcohol with attendees over 100 people.
- The selectboard thanked T. Taravella for her ongoing work on the permit draft.
- H. Shepard expressed his support for the work on this special events permit. The Car Show is one event where he strongly recommends the use of police to direct traffic and turning lanes.
- A. Johnson asked if road races would be included in this category of special events or should have a special kind of permit. Roads aren't closed, but there are a lot of people on the road at one time for these races and that does affect traffic flow.
- A. Johnson also asked about the threshold for requiring permits for music events happening at many establishments in town. T. Taravella said there are a couple of ordinances that could be reviewed on this point. T. Leitz suggested the selectboard consider combining several event-oriented ordinances into one.

- R. Clapp recommended defining the minimum requirements for a permit on the process flowchart.
- T. Taravella will make the recommended changes and circulate the next draft to the town clerk, fire chief, and zoning administrator for their input. A. Johnson said the town clerk will likely have insight on the timeline.

Better Connections Grant Update

T. Leitz reported that the kickoff meeting with the consultant took place.

- Duncan McDougall and Katie Gallagher are going to work with volunteers to get pictures of the September 6 Parks Jam event to give the consultant an idea of what the traffic challenges in Waterbury Center look like.
- They will also be giving the consultant a walking tour of the area on Saturday, October 4 (rain date October 5).
- The Steering Committee will meet in September; the exact date is yet to be set. These meetings will be held at CLiF in Waterbury Center. They have all the wifi bandwidth needed to conduct the meeting according to open meeting law.
- The State vetted the steering committee to ensure it aligned with the municipal code of ethics. Appointed member Marcy Gallagher is employed by Local Motion, which has done work on other Better Connections grants, creating a conflict; D. McDougall let her know she cannot serve on the committee. The selectboard should also formally acknowledge her removal.
- The consultant will try to identify potential storm water projects that our own Public Works Department can initiate.

Motion by R. Clapp to remove Marcy Gallagher from the steering committee; seconded by K. Sweeney.

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

Town Plan aspirations, goals, and strategies

A. Johnson provided photocopies of updated aspirations following last meeting's discussion and also shared the document to the Zoom meeting.

- She acknowledged there is more work to do around strategies but hoped to send the Planning Commissions an agreed-upon set of aspirations.
- The four aspirations are:
 - Waterbury provides modern, high quality, value-added municipal services to residents while maintaining affordability for taxpayers.
 - Waterbury residents of all ages are actively engaged in decision-making on municipal issues and have access to timely, informative, and easily accessible information to inform their decision-making.
 - Waterbury has adequate municipal staffing and facilities to meet the needs of Waterbury residents.
 - Waterbury has responsive local government that is able to meet the needs of residents and adapt to meet future challenges.
- The subsections listed in this document will be migrated to goals and strategies and revised as appropriate. They were pulled from the feedback collected by the Planning Commission and have yet to undergo analysis.

Discussion

- Members of the selectboard made suggestions about which of the subsection items fit best under other aspirations than where currently listed, as well as which subsections might be redundant.
- R. Clapp recommended a goal of protecting the health of the general public, given the increase in natural disasters/flooding.
- B. Vigdor clarified that quite a few people gave feedback about public safety, which makes a police department a valid goal to consider.
- H. Shepard suggested the goal about utilities be reframed to have a study committee that can develop understanding what is feasible for expanding utilities and whether EFUD's future is as a department of the Town. Additionally, if the town is going to pursue housing development, then the goal of a police force should be more concrete.
 - A. Johnson reminded that there is a separate chapter on housing with significantly more robust aspirations and goals.
 - R. Clapp brought up Morristown as a lesson of what to avoid.
- T. Taravella suggested "Enact a comprehensive approach to town population and municipal services" to be added to aspiration 4.

Selectboard and Municipal Manager updates

T. Taravella: Concert at Zenbarn on August 30 at 8:00p.m. that will support displaced Ukrainians. A band from Ukraine is playing.

R. Clapp: Reached out to Susan Clark about scheduling her to come talk to the selectboard about increasing participation in Town Meeting.

K. Sweeney: Completed design for Natural Disaster Response Committee for a call for volunteers. He will provide the file for distribution.

A Johnson:

- Reminded there are a few printed copies of the *Municipal Dispatch* on the bench in the lobby.
- She will be checking in with Skip and Tom on a few things.
- Housing Task Force also meets this week.

T. Leitz:

- Funding available from Northern Borders Regional Commission for recreation projects. A preapplication is due August 29. There is up to \$1 million for infrastructure and up to \$100,000 for feasibility studies. He will work with Katarina to determine the best course for a recreation facility. The preapplication is easy and concise; they then invite applicants to complete full applications. The selectboard will have to approve full applications.
- He will send a reminder for everyone to watch the ethics video by the end of September.
- He will be creating an Instagram account, following social media policy, on the recommendation of the Natural Disaster Coordinator. The town should be using both it and Facebook as the two most popular social media platforms locally.
- We have a free security camera we put in town hall to test out for a month. There are a number of security cameras in the historical society's section of the complex; he's not convinced we need anything further in town offices but recreation has expressed interest. There is further conversation to be taken up on this option. Card access is a bigger priority in his mind.
- Work to undertake the contamination study on other FEMA properties on Union Street is in early stages but underway.

- Pool season is over and by all accounts, the new pool coating was very helpful. Finishing the paint job and a new filter system will be significant projects to consider next year.

The selectboard agreed to keep the first Monday of the month meeting for Labor Day, September 1, but will begin at 7:00 p.m. Regular meetings will also take place on the 15th and 29th of September.

Next meeting agenda items

Capital Plan - sidewalks, Recreation

Stanley Wasson RFQ update and input session from nearby residents

Brian Voigt with CVRPC on stormwater master planning and regional future land use map

Special meeting tentatively scheduled for approving the \$7,500 grant match this next Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. for a grant writer.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by K. Sweeney to find that premature public knowledge of ongoing labor negotiations and attorney-client privilege would place the town of Waterbury at a substantial disadvantage; seconded by R. Clapp.

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

Motion by K. Sweeney to enter executive session and invite the Town Manager; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Selectboard entered executive session at 8:43 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey.