

**Minutes of the Waterbury Selectboard
Monday, October 6, 2025 | 6:30 p.m.
Main Street Fire Station and via Zoom**

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

Public attendance: ORCA Media, Mary Koen, Marie Gervais, Anne Imhoff, Lawrence Dennis, Lucy Ely Pagan, Scott Moran, Sandy Sabin, Chris Viens, Pete Martel, Carrie MacMillan, Cheryl Gloor, Thomas Gloor, Valerie Rogers, Donna Centonze, Skip Flanders, Chris Balzano, Diane Gildea, Mike Davis, Joel Baker, Pat Murray, Bob Finucane, Alec Tuscany, Beth Ann Maier, Robert Famulari, Julie Famulari, Michelle Downing, Brian McGowan, Al Lewis, Sandra Lewis, Joe Camaratta, Terry Griffith, Tom Stevens, Bill Shepeluk, Brian Kravitz, Phoebe Pelkey, Kenneth Ryan, Brian Reilly, Jena Grace, Jon Grace, Em Lamson, Evan Karl Hoffman, Billy Vigdor, Harry Shepard, Lisa Scagliotti, Dustin Spence, Dana Allen, Mal Culbertson, Martha Staskus

Zoom attendance: ORCA Media, Wayne Quillin, Sue Johansen, Bill Woodruff, Anna Shelley, Amy Marshall-Carney, Kathi Grace, Mike Dacey, Theresa Wood, Pegeen Mulhern, Tony Sanchez, Katrina Burk, Jess Neubelt, Tessa Yip, Sue Minter, Jan Gendreau, Mark, Dani Kehlmann

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

Agendas

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the agenda as presented; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Public comment

None.

Stanley Wasson proposal and public discussion

T. Leitz shared a presentation with a summary of the recent history and current proposal for the Stanley Wasson project:

- Creation of Housing Task Force in 2022 to support town plan goals of creating more housing and affordable housing.
- In 2023, the State approved the sale of the Stanley Wasson to the Town. The Town formally executed the option to purchase the parcel for \$400,000 in April 2025. There is no obligation to purchase.
- In 2024, updated bylaws were completed. A major part of the update was to encourage more housing and more housing density in the downtown area, formerly the Village. Any development in this area will come before the DRB. It is unclear whether any housing project on this site would additionally require an Act 250 permit. There will also be a vigorous historic review by the State because it's in the historic district.

- The parcel was added to the Waterbury Designated Downtown district. This designation typically doesn't require Act 250 permits.
- After two public meetings, the Town put out a request for qualifications (RFQ), which is less formal than a request for proposal (RFP) to gauge ideas and developer interest. A critical piece of the RFQ was that the Town is looking to make back the purchase price for the taxpayers. This can be a turnoff for developers.
- A Phase I environmental site assessment was completed. This assessment is posted on the website. The critical finding is that nothing obvious was found suggesting the site is dirty, but additional testing will be done.
- An attorney specializing in land use identified what information in the RFQ could not be made public, and what can be made public is on the website (linked above).
 - What's not public: some sketches (considered trade secrets at this point) that are only ideas at this point.
- The parcel is about 2.4 acres.
- The next step with the developer, should the select board decide to take it, is to sign a contract with the developer for exclusivity on the project for a period of time.
 - The developer will pay for a market study (must be done by a third party).
 - The developer will do some site testing.
 - The developer will do more detailed planning for engineering and permitting.
- There are some grant opportunities that are likely of great mutual benefit for the town and the developer.
- Timelines are completely impossible to predict because there is no exact roadmap for this situation.
- He acknowledged that he has more questions than answers, just like the public, and the community's participation and patience with the many challenges will be critical.
- Fiscal impact:
 - Given a scenario of \$250K/unit:
 - 1.5% growth in grand list, or \$120K in Town taxes
 - \$475K in education taxes
 - EFUD note: 90 units of new connections pay a base allocation fee that would generate a one-time revenue of over \$100K each for water and sewer. Water and sewer utilities run on economies of scale.
- CHIP program:
 - A state financing program that would allow for a municipality or a developer to keep the property tax revenue and invest it on the site. Note: The bill has passed but the state has yet to finalize the rules. Affordable housing counts as an appropriate site investment.
 - Randall Meadow is the next-door parcel, and it is unclear whether the funds can be used to pay for Randall Meadow, but it *may be possible*.
 - Two grant applications have been submitted for the Randall Meadow project. One is a FEMA grant, which is reimbursement-based and currently, this is a significant worry and an administrative nightmare.

Discussion

A. Johnson requested that T. Leitz review how to [find the information](#) on the town website.

P. Martel reminded the Select Board that this parcel is in a hazard zone for floods. He asked them to take that responsibility to heart before moving forward with a project that will cause additional harm to the surrounding neighborhood.

- T. Leitz said the developer has hired Grenier Engineering as a local presence, and the Town works with Grenier quite a bit. The Town can contract with an additional engineer to ensure such concerns are addressed.

B. Kravitz said we do need housing and the long-term financial impact is desirable. He has faith the select board will make sure the development won't do any more harm. His question is whether it is prudent to start this project before the Randall Meadow work is complete.

- T. Leitz said the timing of both projects is uncertain, and the process with the developer is a long one. We're at least 18 months of permitting and designing once we have cash in hand. If the grants for Randall Meadow aren't awarded, we might need to ask the public to approve a bond.

B. Shepeluk thanked the select board and T. Leitz for the work done to date on this opportunity.

- The Town is fortunate that there is an opportunity for it to be involved in the development of this property. This is the best scenario compared to the State deciding to sell directly to a developer.
- Our zoning bylaws account for development in flood areas, so he has faith this project is moving in the right direction.

D. Allen, who serves on the Planning Commission and contracts with the Town as a flood resilient grant management consultant, said the DRB has been given additional oversight with the new downtown designation expansion to include this site.

- In terms of grants, he said the town is pursuing a number of grants for the Randall Meadow project. That project is meaningful in terms of flood mitigation, but it isn't the only project.
- He is working on identifying grants for additional projects, such as stormwater management planning.

K. Grace said she has been flooded three times on S. Main Street. If the developer is going to raise a building on the Stanley Wasson site, he has to remove soil for net zero. Possibly that can be done in conjunction with the Randall Meadow project, which also entails .

- She is additionally worried about the displacement of water with a new building on that site.
- Her experience with finding renters for her four apartments suggests the housing crisis isn't quite what it has been billed to be. There are too many apartments listed as available these days, and the number of applicants she has is down.

S. Minter said local employers continue to struggle to find workers because of housing.

- In the past, she has worked with the planning commission, as secretary of transportation, and other groups to make progress on helping Waterbury flourish and grow in sustainable ways.
- She believes this success is due to the community coming together and investing in housing and children to fill our schools.
- She asked about a hydrology study being done before the site is purchased. Do we believe it is developable without putting the neighborhood at risk?

- T. Leitz responded that we will need some expert advice to walk us through this process. Part of that is the expert analysis to which S. Minter referred.

J. Neubelt underscored that we are still in a housing crisis.

- Research shows the state needs at least 26,000 new housing units before 2029.
- UVM also found that 60% of village centers and downtowns are in flood zones.
- This site already has access to water and sewer and presents one of the better opportunities for housing development, and she hopes people keep an open mind.

B. Finucane said housing will get built, either more or less desirable from an environmental point of view. He would like to see more people densely located in the downtown area, with more people joining and contributing to the community.

A. Lewis emphasized K. Grace's point about mitigation needing to be addressed at some point in the process. One possibility would be to excavate the material needed to offset the footprint of a new building from the smokestack area of the meadow.

P. Murray said he's only seen the positive aspects of the project, but nobody has talked about the state complex and the impact of employees being required back in the office. Traffic patterns, available services, and other elements of daily life downtown will be affected, and these considerations need to be discussed as well.

E. Lamson agreed that Randall Meadow should be a priority. The City of Barre has done some dredging of the river and we should look to address the river itself before we build any more in the flood plain.

W. Quillin asked for clarification on the process going forward and if request for proposals will be a next step, since we only have one response at the RFQ stage.

- T. Leitz said path options are:
 - The select board can say, let's start fresh.
 - We can engage with this one interested developer, which will be a long process.
- T. Leitz is not sure putting the bid out again will garner any different results. The RFQ was out for two months.

M. Dacey said it would be helpful if the Town would produce a brief information piece describing the limitations of what can be put on the property.

- Some recently-constructed buildings have proven hardy in floods.
- He said he was surprised the RFQ was closing because he didn't know it had opened up; it might be worth considering extending the timeline.

A Marshall-Carney said the bid to secure a developer can typically be much longer, as much as a year. She supports revisiting the timeline for the bid, suggesting a robust and diverse bid process would be fruitful.

- An extension to the procurement process phase would be more compatible to the size, scope, and risks associated with the project.

- She agreed with the sentiment that hopes, wishes, and goals would be prudently matched with risks and overall realized impacts.

C. Viens acknowledged some of the conversation is premature for getting answers to questions.

- He supports a housing project if it can yield a positive revenue stream that doesn't burden the town and raise taxes in perpetuity.
- There is a cost burden that comes with any kind of development.
- He advised the select board not to get too wrapped up chasing too many proposals and RFQs.
- The end result simply needs to be getting paid back for the property. Tax revenues will then be part of the payoff in the end. He asked about the possibilities of the water and sewer allocations being waived if that becomes the only factor standing between the town and the developer completing the project.
- T. Leitz said he is not aware of any history of water and sewer allocations being waived, but that decision would be up to the EFUD board. If the developer tries to ask for a waiver down the road, he'll be told he had that opportunity in September 2025.

R. Clapp confirmed with T. Leitz that our option agreement with the State can be extended if we want to take more time to solicit developer qualifications and concepts.

M. Gervais asked for the developer to consider senior housing so that elderly community members can downsize affordably.

H. Shepard said it is noteworthy there is only one submission, likely in large part due to the very criteria being discussed tonight.

- There are many requirements for construction in flood zones. The project can be done, but it is extremely onerous and the Town should be cautious about what it commits to in this process. There aren't many options in our marketplace for a developer willing to meet our specs, and he is glad to know that Dew Properties made the submission. He further wondered how additional housing units will impact public safety resources and needs.

M. Downing thanked the select board and T. Leitz for all of the work and public outreach. She supports the town purchasing the property to keep development under local control.

- Given the current state of FEMA, if something were to occur again, we need to make sure we have the infrastructure in place to help the neighborhood.
- Concerns about traffic on Randall Street also should be considered.

T. Wood reminded everyone that we are in the beginning stages of a potential project.

- The select board is thinking about this as an opportunity, but also thinking about how to engage the community about questions and concerns, drawing on local expertise.
- She prefers to have the community play an integral role in the decision-making process.

A. Johnson thanked T. Wood as one of our state representatives for the work she and Rep. Tom Stevens did to enable Waterbury to have this local control over the property.

A. Tuscany returned to the topic of public safety.

- The current VSP coverage is potentially inadequate for our current needs.
- He asked if the Town is exploring ways to expand police coverage.
- Additionally, he wondered if the volunteer Fire Department would reach a point where a full-time employee is necessary.

M. Culbertson is excited about the project.

- As a volunteer in the 2023/2024 floods, she saw the benefits of O'Hare Street's newer units being raised. There are benefits to having new people join the community.
- There are boards, commissions, and community organizations with empty seats and reduction in volunteer force.
- Worker housing that is affordable is a key positive outcome from the project.
- Building units with renewable energy elements and alongside plenty of greenspace is important.

E. Hoffman said the 51 S. Main Street ended up with half of the units originally promised. Does the current RFQ

- T. Leitz said there is more room for 90 units that the developer would prefer to use. The current sketches show a lot of green space.

E. Hoffman is concerned about having only one submission at this stage and requested that T. Leitz reach out to the usual crew of developers to inquire why they aren't interested in submitting.

C. Gloor said whatever decision is made will have a long-term impact on the community. She is concerned about infrastructure and public safety.

- We don't even know the impact of the new 51 S. Main St. complex will be.
- She asked the select board not to move too fast with too much, with an eye toward long-term impacts.

K. Grace summarized her experience with local traffic and the frequent impossibility of turning left out of her driveway.

- She asked for clarification about ownership of the property once we purchase it from the State.
- Lifelong Waterbury residents who want to leave their larger homes and live in a maintenance-free condo or townhouse is an underserved population.
- She asked if fewer larger units for our senior citizens who want to stay in the community but downsize to smaller quarters is a possibility, and also requested a traffic study.
 - T. Leitz can't comment on what we were offered for the lot at this time. However, he will strongly recommend to the select board that they not get into the real estate business, ever.
 - We would not buy the property from the state until we have 100% clarity and an agreement with the developer on that property.

C. Viens said that infrastructure and public safety needs will cancel out the tax revenue benefits of more development.

- His concern is that trying to solve the housing crisis will create another housing crisis by driving current residents out of their homes.
- People who have been there most or all of their lives deserve the right to stay here.

- Continual growth seems to accumulate more issues, compounding problems requiring more revenue to solve.

M. Koen said she wants to put her trust in the representatives we have elected and hired to take on these decisions and give every important factor due consideration. She supports building housing on this site and doesn't believe growing the community will result in higher crime.

R. Clapp said the select board is in agreement that we will not take possession of the property until we have a clear buyer with an acceptable plan. Regarding senior housing, seniors are automatically considered qualified for affordable housing, so that can conceivably be part of this package.

M. Bard acknowledged the project is controversial.

- Public input is important.
- Development sometimes has to take place, especially in village property, in flood zones. Some counties in the U.S. are entirely in a flood plain.
- We need to do responsible work so as not to create more or new problems. He agrees that we need housing in this community. There are ways to work through the challenges identified tonight.

K. Sweeney said he hasn't heard anyone oppose the project outright. We've come a long way on where people stand on big housing projects in Waterbury.

- Our community recognizes the housing crisis isn't getting any better and it is drawing economic vitality away from Waterbury.
- As B. Shepeluk said, we either get a say about what happens on this property, or we don't.
- An immense amount of work has gone into making sure we have a seat at the table and our community has a voice in what happens on this site.

A. Shelley pointed out the comments made about the implications this project will have for homeowners and property taxes and acknowledged home ownership is a privilege, especially multiple home ownership. Access to affordable housing is not. She further stated that an "us versus them" mentality when it comes to who should be served by this project is not only unproductive but a false comparison.

M. Staskus also praised the immense work that went into the process. Speaking for the Planning Commission, they are watching this project closely. She said the bylaws amendments will greatly help the DRB in making decisions.

P. Martel asked what happens if we don't buy that parcel from the State.

- T. Leitz said he strongly suspects the State would sell it if Waterbury doesn't buy it. He was told by the State that they hang onto property unless they really feel they won't have any future use for it. There's no guarantee they would sell it if we said no, but he finds it very likely.

P. Martel asked how the developer will be held accountable to doing what they say they will do.

- T. Leitz said a very well-written contract will hold the developer accountable. Just how that contract needs to be written hasn't yet been tackled.

T. Stevens clarified the process, noting that the State removed the buildings that were there at their own expense as they looked for buyers.

- The legislature had to pass a law to allow the state to negotiate with the town and give Waterbury the right of first refusal. It has been over a decade to get to this point.
- If we choose not to buy this property, the legislation would be mooted and the property would be available for sale again by the State.
- He asked the public to have some patience with the process.

D. Spence asked if Dew Properties has any experience managing housing, or do they just do construction.

- T. Leitz said they do have an ownership arm for their company. They have worked on affordable housing projects.

T. Gloor asked about the difference between affordable and workforce housing.

- K. Sweeney said the HUD percentage for affordable housing is 30% of income or below. Workforce housing is just fancy terminology that is most often used by employers.
- T. Stevens added that over 50% of renters in this state are cost burdened, meaning they are paying more than 50% of their income for basic housing needs. This is what the housing crisis means.

T. Gloor followed up asking if affordable housing conditions were included in the RFQ.

- T. Leitz said that the RFQ indicated an affordable housing

T. Leitz read K. Grace's comment in the Zoom chat:

- If people in town could move into smaller quarters, their larger homes would be available for families. The townhouses behind the Best Western are well sought after. It creates a community for like minded-elders to stay engaged without all the maintenance of home ownership.

L. Dennis asked if we have historical coding that would require the developer to use certain kinds of design standards, and whether the units be rental or purchase.

- T. Leitz said the historic district is a state-level review. The form of ownership of the units is not yet public information.
- B. Shepeluk added that the site is also part of the design review overlay district, so bases are covered.

A. Johnson thanked everyone for attending and providing comments. She encouraged

Review of [draft Local Option Tax \(LOT\) policy](#)

T. Leitz began by noting that this discussion is evidence of the select board taking up an issue championed by a member of the community. He then presented the drafted policy.

- The approved use of funds have not been changed with the exception of a typo in his original posted document.
- He added some aspirations that he thinks are consistent with what he's heard from the board.
- Specifically aspiration #3 calls for a public vote on the use of surplus LOTS funds.

A. Johnson asked for a bit of history about what is in the municipal charter.

- T. Leitz said the Waterbury municipal charter does not limit ways to spend revenue. The select board identified four "buckets" for spending.

- The first bucket is debt management.
- The second is a broader area of investment in community vitality, which can include affordable housing, flood mitigation, and utilities expansion.
- The third bucket is monetizing municipal operations, which includes technology investments.
- Finally, the last bucket is for improving our fund balance.

Discussion

K. Sweeney said this doesn't go farther than what a lot of us already assumed. The buckets are broad on purpose. He particularly likes aspiration #4 about not using the LOT to fund normal municipal operations.

B. Vigdor said he appreciates the formally written policy, but isn't clear what role the aspirations are meant to play in the document. Number 3 doesn't look like an aspiration but rather something that would tie the select board's hands. He suggested that language be clarified to be more precise.

P. Martel asked if a portion of this revenue stream can be set aside for projects that we once relied on FEMA reimbursements for.

- T. Leitz responded that the ironclad way to create a special savings account for specific purposes, such as flood mitigation and flood recovery, is to have the voters create one.
- Part of the reason he did not include that consideration here is that the voters have already created that savings account with the tax destabilization fund.

J. Camaratta noted the policy does not address whether the surplus funds are rolled over into the next year.

- T. Leitz said yes. If the voters approve the use of funds for a project that will need to be spent in a subsequent year, those funds remain available for that use.

K. Grace asked how much information was provided to voters before they were asked to vote on LOT spending. In her observations, the use of the LOT seems to be done at the whim of the select board.

- T. Leitz clarified the LOT is a retail sales tax, including groceries that aren't food.
- K. Grace said she did not realize how much more in taxes she would be paying per year with this tax in place.

A. Johnson pulled up the statute language approved by the voters, which (1) allowed for a local option tax and (2) clarified the authority of the municipal manager.

- This draft policy is a codification of what was presented to the public in 2023.
- Previous presentations and meeting minutes addressing this topic can be found on the town website.

T. Taravella said it would be good to add something to the policy about how leftover funds are treated.

C. Gloor asked for consistency between the previous presentation document and the language of the bullet points in the draft policy itself.

V. Rogers asked why the language is "shall reasonably endeavor" instead of more direct "will."

- M. Bard agreed that the language should be more direct and action-oriented.
- T. Taravella said the two versions legally mean the same thing.

V. Rogers added:

- The third aspiration should refer to the vote of the public in approving surplus.
- One-time projects that invest in our community should also be eligible for LOT usage.
- Any money for housing should be voted on by the public.

S. Sabin, who specifically championed the issue, said she feels much better about having this policy written down.

- She would like to see “significant expenses” more specifically defined as a number.
- She again requested the following language be added: *Any request for funding by an organization that is outside of town government has to be requested through appropriations and included on the warning for taxpayers to approve at the town meeting.*
- She disagreed that a reserve for housing (the housing trust fund) was okayed by the voters.

T. Gloor asked if unallocated funds can be put in a reserve at the end of the year.

- T. Leitz said there are many different ways to manage these funds, and it comes down to preference.
- M. Bard said the tax stabilization fund is already set up to be that reserve, and the LOT might not be the place to get into creating reserves.

The select board agreed that a new draft was needed before a vote to adopt the policy could be taken.

Grand List errors and omissions

T. Leitz reviewed the letter from the assessor.

- He noted errors and omissions are a typical matter of routine business.
- The proposed correction has a very minor impact on taxes.

Motion by R. Clapp to accept....; seconded by M. Bard.

T. Taravella recused herself from the vote.

No further discussion; **motion passed 4-0 with 1 (T. Taravella) abstention.**

Grant Updates

T. Leitz reported:

- Randall Meadow project:
 - We’re still waiting to hear about the FEMA grant for Randall Meadow.
 - At the end of September, the town applied for a HUD grant (Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery) to implement the project, with an updated cost of \$4.25 million. We hope to know about this grant by the end of the year.
 - He hopes the town will have more information about the funding for the Randall Meadow project before the budgeting process and the warning for Town Meeting is complete, in case we need a bond vote.
- The town is working on a clean water funding grant, in concert with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. It’s a lesser pot of money, but it would be Randall Meadow money as well.

- Working on applying for funds to remove what is left of the dams on Thatcher Brook in Waterbury Center. It will potentially give some flood relief.
- Several other grant applications address opportunities for up to 30% design on stormwater mitigation projects.

Discussion

K. Sweeney acknowledged his outlook for federal grants right now is bleak. If we don't receive full grant funding for Randall Meadow, we still have to move forward on that project one way or another.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by K. Sweeney to find that premature public knowledge of personnel and collective bargaining will put the town of Waterbury at a significant disadvantage; seconded by T. Taravella.
No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

Motion by K. Sweeney to move into executive session and invite the Municipal Manager; seconded by T. Taravella.
No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously.**

The select board entered executive session at 9:11 p.m.

The select board exited executive session at 10:17 p.m. with no action taken.

ADJOURNMENT, 10:17 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, October 20, at 6:30 p.m. at 28 N. Main Street and on Zoom

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey.