

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Waterbury Selectboard
Sunday, December 7, 2025
Steele Community Room, 28 N Main St and via Zoom

Attendees: Alyssa Johnson, Kane Sweeney, Mike Bard, Tori Taravella, Roger Clapp, Chris Viens, Rachel Muse, Joe Lumbar, Bill Woodruff, Tom Leitz, Kenney Ryan

The meeting was called to order by A. Johnson at 9:15 am.

Approve agenda

T. Taravella made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by R. Clapp and passed unanimously.

Consent agenda item

Approve Minutes of Selectboard Meeting December 1, 2025

K. Sweeney made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by R. Clapp and passed 4-0-1 with T. Taravella abstaining.

Public comment

M. Bard noted the observation of the Pearl Harbor anniversary, and thanked all Veterans for their service.

J. Lumbar noted that the audio for the Selectboard meeting on ORCA he was watching on cable news was unintelligible, hence his coming in person to the meeting. He asked if the Board could improve the microphone and audio for future meetings, especially for the municipal manager. The ORCA representative clarified that the meeting was not being livestreamed, so the audio was from a previously recorded meeting.

Continued 2026 budget review and discussion, including:

- **Preliminary review of municipal department budgets**
- **Rereview of local option tax spending proposals**
- **Considerations for drafting of the Town Meeting warning**

T. Leitz noted that on Friday he had reviewed minutes from the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) listed amounts for Waterbury. He reiterated that he has not received a call or notified, but that the amount listed include \$2 million in mitigation funding for the Randall Meadow project and full funding for the Woody Ave implementation.

He noted that this budget is fundamentally different than the other budgets he has put together. He noted that the Town gets a substantial amount of PILOT funding, but that the amount received this year was substantially under budget. T. Leitz gave additional background about the payment and funding formula, and intends to do further follow up in this area. Overall, as of this preliminary budget draft early in the process, the tax rate would go up 2.4 cents or 4.05%.

Highway budget

The group began with a discussion of the highway budget. B. Woodruff joined the meeting with T. Leitz. There was discussion of VT Highway Sid, which unless there is a change in the law, will be same of last year. It was noted that there was some bumpy payments in the past that were accelerated because of the floods.

It was noted that highway pay actuals will get adjusted a year end, some will go to other departments, such as recreation and parks. The budget assumes maintaining the current headcount filling a pending retirement on April, and assuming new hire would take a family healthcare plan. It was noted that overtime in the is driven more by mud season than by snowplowing. There was discussion of completed and anticipated gravel road work. It was noted that vehicle maintenance was increased from last year, and that it was previously it was budgeted in two separate lines: one for equipment and one for maintenance. The town also no longer employs a mechanic, so pays more for labor. There was review of the line for expected cost to send one person to CDL training, as it was anticipated that a new hires are going to need to be CDL trained. There was a question and clarification that employees would be expected to stay for a set amount of time based on the investment of getting a CDL.

It was noted that the tree maintenance line was increased, and there was an increase for trees in the cemetery budget. Public works has mostly been focused on problem trees, and occasionally tree pruning. Tree budget doesn't have there own budget, but has asked for one. There was further discussion about the Tree Board budget, including the one time money in the Local Option Tax. M. Bard noted he wanted to look at big ticket, structural items and advocated for it being in the general line. There was discussion of having a sperate Tree Board budget line, which some members thought was reasonable given their amount of work.

There was discussion of the salt policy adopted by the Board where most roads in the downtown area are not salted, and the potential to expand this policy to other areas. There was discussion of the gravel budget funding through the LOT and work that had been accomplished. There was discussion of the increased budget for traffic control, which includes signage and line striping. It was noted that the Better Connections project focused on Waterbury Center won't be done until next summer, but this funding could help implement low cost recommendations. It is also hoped that the grant will lead to other competitive grant funding.

It was noted that there was not additional funding budgeted for speed bumps. There was discussion regarding the location and uses of temporary speed bumps. The implications of hiring a Sherriff, as proposed in the LOT to begin in 2026, was also discussed. There was discussion regarding the location of state police.

It was clarified that tuition line was CDL specific, and other training was for occasional training for welding or other course through VT roads program. It was noted that the Capital Funds would be reviewed. There was discussion of planning paving projects, and it was noted that 2027 is likely a big year because the start of Guptil Road. Capital fund funding for a contractor to replace culverts as 13/15 should likely be replaces prior to paving. There was discussion of the existing highway debt, including previous paving bonds and equipment, as well as the vehicles financed through the local option tax last year.

There was additional discussion regarding sidewalks. It was noted that there was not funding budgeted, but still several areas in need of attention, including those that were still 4ft. There was discussion regarding the pros and cons of doing sidewalk work with Town staff or contracting it out, and timing and cost implications of various components of sidewalk design. There was additional discussion of the use of foam under sidewalks and results so far in areas where this had been tried in Waterbury.

Library budget

R. Muse joined T. Leitz for this section of the presentation. It was noted that the Library budget had not yet been reviewed with the Library Commissioners but would be on Monday.

It was noted that Duxbury transition to a payment for library services, rather than reimbursing folks for non-resident fees. The Friends of the Library are a huge asset, and have significant success with fundraising, so is budgeted. T. Leitz noted that there was not proposing a change in the amount of funding from the Library Trust Fund. There was the discussion of the trust fund, and other invested funds the Town of Waterbury has, which have generally done well with the current stock market- the library trust was approximately \$660k, and is now \$750k. T. Letiz noted he may do some minor rebalancing of the funds.

There was additional review of the library budget. It was noted that the staffing profile for the budget assumes all staff right now, filling a current vacancy. There is an increase in part time pay to give full timers more flexibility, especially on weekend hours. The benefits based on actuals/headcounts.

It was noted that books line includes not just books, but also significant online materials and other resources. This amount is increased by 5% for next year. R. Muse noted that the purchases made by the Friends of the Library funding are tracked by both the Friends and Library Director. The funds are generally for an unexpected project or something outside the budget.

It was noted that the tech librarian has been doing some of the maintenance on public computers, which helps with savings in that area. T. Letiz noted that the IT service provided by Bob Butler was an excellent value for the service, and that when he no longer is willing to provide services to the Town, the costs will likely increase significantly.

R. Muse provided additional updates about programming and ongoing initiatives. She noted that she is working with the Friends of the Library on replacing furniture, which has generally held up well but is 10 years old. There was additional discussion of ideas for collaboration with recreation department. R. Muse reviewed the “Wrapped” statistics of annual visits and circulation numbers. There was discussion regarding the sliding scale changes for the recreation program that had been implemented previously, but was noted that was minimal impact, as the library had previously changed the age for people to attend without being registered for a program. R. Muse noted that overall the library works to continually to reach underserved parts of the community through a variety of programs, which was a big focus in the library’s strategic plan. There was additional discussion of the library’s “library of things.”

General government

T. Leitz reviewed the general government expenses, including tax interest and penalties, noting that this assumes the 8% penalty is approved by voters at Town Meeting. The Village admin fee is old language that reflects the EFUD contributions for Town Manager’s bookkeeper’s, and Public Work Director’s time. The challenges with PILOT payments previously discussed were reiterated. The Forest and Parks and Current Use payments provided by the state were noted.

Town clerk fees, which are largely set by state, are down because of reduced real estate transitions. It was noted that the \$50k from tax stabilization fund was budgeted. Discussion of tax stabilization – up to 5% of the fund to limit tax growth. The current value of the fund is approximately 1.1 million.

C. Viens asked questions and there was discussion regarding using the LOT as a tax stabilization fund. It was noted. It was noted that the CDBG funding award was not reflected, and there would be subsequent update of the LOT proposals. T. Letiz noted that the budget includes 15 hour per week position to start April 1 to help with administrative coverage in the Town Offices. The Natural Disaster coordinator pay was discussed.

It was noted that the health insurance deductibles were under budget, but it was an area where T. Letiz thought it was important to budget conservatively.

The software fees for mapping software and updating those were reviewed. T. Letiz noted a new proposed line specifically for legal costs related to Freedom of Information requests. It was noted that the planning department also had its own legal budget.

T. Letiz noted he had met with the Town Clerk to review and discuss election expenses, which were reflected in the budget.

There was discussion regarding the funding for the 4th of July fireworks, and several Selectboard members noted the desire for future conversations about having a drone show and gathering further input on the matter.

There was discussion of additional funding lines. T. Leitz noted that the Senior Citizens request hasn't changed, and RW's budget was based on their request at the presentation a month ago. It was noted that funding for the organization used to be on two separate lines in prior years. The solid waste \$7 per capita fee was anticipated to stay the same. The public health funding is for Washington County Mental Health, and the same as prior years. There was additional discussion of pound fees.

For the public safety section, it was noted that the state police contract is staying the same for the year, and expires in mid 2027. It was noted that the current budget includes an 8% increase for Waterbury Ambulance Service, Inc. (WASI). T. Letiz noted he met with the ambulance service director and that the initial request had been a 15% increase. There was additional discussion of WASI. Selectboard members that they noted would like to hear directly from the folks there at a future meeting.

M. Bard inquired about potential funding Waterbury was stewarding from the Central VT State Police advisory committee. The Municipal Building Operating Fund (MBOF) was discussed. It was noted that the problems in 2024 with the heating had been resolved, and are well managed by B. Woodruff. B. Woodruff also is working on the card access system for the building, which was included in the LOT funding approved at Town Meeting. Insurance grant money and EFUD may also contribute to this cost.

It was noted that there was no funding related to a reconfiguration of the municipal offices, as those conversations were still in very preliminary stages, and had unearthed significant additional complexity.

There was discussion regarding budgeting for floods, and potential of building a fund over time. It was noted that in some ways the LOT as currently formulated is serving this purpose.

There was discussion about formalizing the housing trust fund through a public question. It was noted that the fund already has a criteria specifying its eligible uses. By consensus, the Board did not support having this as a separate item on the warning for Town Meeting.

There was additional discussion about uses of the LOT and potential of putting it in a special reserve.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Alyssa Johnson, Selectboard Chair