

**Minutes of the Waterbury Selectboard**  
**Monday, December 15, 2025 | 6:30 p.m.**  
**28 N. Main St. and via Zoom**

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

**Public attendance:** ORCA Media, Chris Viens, Sandy Sabin, Bill Shepeluk, Ingrid Shepeluk, Amy Marshall-Carney, Peter Martel, Kenny Ryan, Kia Nealy, Mal Culbertson, Gary Dillon, Lisa Scagliotti, Evan Karl Hoffman, Mark Poulin, Brett Meyer

**Zoom attendance:** ORCA Media, Erika Linskey, Carl James, Harper, Michelle Ryan, Katie Clark Johnson, Patrick Black, Billy Vigdor, Katie Mandych, Theresa Wood, Valerie Rogers, Anne Imhoff

CALL TO ORDER 6:37 p.m. by A. Johnson

**AGENDAS**

**Meeting agenda**

**Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the meeting agenda with the amendment to modify section b of the consent agenda to correct the minutes date to December 7; seconded by R. Clapp.**

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

**Consent agenda**

**Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the consent agenda as modified; seconded by T. Taravella.**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**REGULAR BUSINESS**

**Consider recommendation of candidate for Recreation Director**

A. Johnson set context with reference to the Town Charter's stipulation that department heads need to be approved by the select board before they are formally hired.

**Motion by R. Clapp to approve the appointment of Erica Linsky as Recreation Director; seconded by M. Bard.**

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

**Additional comment:**

B. Shepeluk asked why the select board is approving by motion the appointment of a Town employee. T. Leitz and A. Johnson clarified that the new town charter requires this approval.

**Update on municipal staffing**

Remarks from T. Leitz:

- Context on positions turning over: high turnover happened in EFUD a few years ago, and these situations are typical.
- We have just hired a new Recreation Director, and we are restructuring the assistant director position to expand the duties since some other programming, particularly the after-school program, has dwindled.
- Highway has lost two people in the last couple of years; one has been filled with a permanent hire and other with a temporary hire.
- An internal hire filled a vacancy in the Library.
- Resignation of Town Clerk and the retirement of the Assistant Town Clerk.
  - We have an in-house resource with a couple of decades of being a town clerk who is willing to help out.
  - LeeAnn Viens has been helping out with some of the financial tasks.
- Some turnover is undoubtedly due to his decision to change health care plans and particularly how he implemented them.
  - The change was motivated by significant disparities in what individuals had to pay out.
  - The town now has every employee on the same plan, with the same deductible and more stability and predictability in rates.
  - The change has caused some turmoil and was likely behind the employees' decision to unionize. He owns the mistakes he made in how he rolled out the plan and communicated it.
- Some of the successes that don't really get talked about, such as a new employee handbook that added a lot of benefits for employees, including a partially-paid family leave plan and a hardship clause for sick time to be paid out in situations of need.
- Update on the collective bargaining agreements: Both the town and EFUD have handshake agreements. They are editing the contracts before they go to a vote.
  - He thinks negotiations have been amicable, respectful on everyone's part, and successful.
  - The contract does ensure employees are treated equitably, which he welcomes.
- The budget for 2026 has some funding for an HR consultant, in part for technical matters and in part for some management assistance, which will be useful for all of us. He isn't proposing full-time HR staff at this time, but he does think there is some capacity in which that support is needed.
- He is looking forward to the new union contract offering more clarity and easier decision-making for everyone.

## **Discussion**

I. Shepeluk thanked T. Leitz for taking responsibility for his mistakes and recommended sharing those remarks with the employees.

A Marshall-Carney said the rate of turnover speaks to more than the issue of the health plan and suggests something more systemic.

- The loss of institutional knowledge is worrying, and that is one of the biggest risks of what has been taking place over the last 13 months.
- She wondered if staff members who have left might be willing to return. Trust must be rebuilt and sustained.

C. Viens expressed his support of A. Marshall-Carney's remarks and hopes the new contract will stop the departures.

- He asked how the new union contract addresses performance review and accountability for the employee.
- T. Leitz can't talk about the contract yet because it's not public, but many union contracts look much like the new employee handbook, including the requirements for performance review.

M. Ryan said for the record that no one left because of health care, but because of T. Leitz.

B. Shepeluk said he appreciates all the work people have done and the successes that have been achieved.

- The health insurance had been purely a monetary commitment by the town and T. Leitz is right that the commitment could not be sustained; he had sent memos to employees about this eventuality when he was Town Manager.
- He thinks the current plan is pretty decent and a good plan, but not having the opportunity to choose the plan that works best for them and their families can be upsetting to some people.
- His concern as a taxpayer is that it costs a lot of money to change employees because of the loss of institutional memory and the resources needed to train new employees; additionally, new employees tend to come in for a higher rate of pay.
- Finally, the office has been down one employee for months and the people who have been getting that work done in addition to their own jobs should be compensated accordingly.

E. Brown echoed A. Marshall-Carney's remarks and said M. Ryan was brave for her statement.

M. Culbertson is curious about what the board has experienced in fielding concerns from town employees and what the process is, if there is one; she echoed the call for transparency.

T. Wood acknowledged that in systems change like this, it is extremely difficult to change leadership when we've had the same leader for decades.

- We should keep in mind that anyone coming into an organization to fill those shoes is going to have a difficult time in transition; at the same time, we had quite a bit of turnover in the selectboard.
- As a community member, she would like to ensure we support the town in this transition as well as understand the concerns the staff has had.

M. Bard said transparency is crucial, and he knows some employees are not happy with every decision.

- However, he never heard directly from one employee the kinds of things that are being referenced this evening.
- He thinks the *Roundabout* article created a bit of a hornet's nest.
- Every one of the changes are in regards to issues that had been in existence. People have left for a variety of issues.
- He saw some changes in behavior from some of the staff along the way, but only the town manager ever brought concerns to him.
- The compensation our town staff receive is pretty good, but sometimes they leave for a dollar or two more in wages without even considering benefits.

M. Ryan said that everyone on the selectboard received two emails from her to which she didn't receive a response.

- M. Bard indicated such group emails are typically handled by the chair of the selectboard board.
- M. Ryan said she will give M. Bard a call to talk in person.

R. Clapp said we are all human and make mistakes; he knows he has made mistakes as a member of the selectboard and apologized for the mistakes he has made.

- He also feels the selectboard has appropriately addressed mistakes by the town manager, which are dealt with in confidence as personnel matters.

K. Nealy asked who employees can go to if they have a problem. She was told she can't go to the selectboard.

- T. Leitz responded that employees should be able to come to him, and he is happy to discuss concerns even if they are about him, and if he can't address them adequately, employees should contact the chair of the selectboard.
- Further, the union contract will have a grievance process in place.

A. Johnson said that personally, she and her fellow board members are working as hard as they can to support all town employees and they don't always get it right.

### **Flood mitigation updates & CDBG-DR awards**

T. Leitz reported the town [received \\$2 million](#) (out of the \$4.3 million budget submitted) for implementation of the Randall Meadow project.

- He will have more detail for the next meeting, but it appears we are marching towards a public conversation about what to do about the difference in funding; it might be a bond vote, or it might mean we adjust the project for the current funding available, which could reduce the degree of flood relief we can get out of this project.
- A bond doesn't automatically mean raising taxes; it can be paid for through local option tax money. Interest rates for issuing debt are good at this time.
- Either way, the state is only going to release the grant money if the town shows it has funding for the full project.

The town was awarded the full amount for a planning grant for the Woody Avenue project.

The funds do include a good amount of money for consultants to manage the heavy administrative lift.

### **Discussion**

R. Clapp asked about the CWISP funding, a clean water grant available through the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

- T. Leitz explained that the grant is for phosphorus reduction, and CVRPC said that until the Randall Meadow project is fully engineered and designed, they can't calculate the rate of phosphorus reduction. Only then will we be in position to receive the clean water grant funding.
- There are several months to go in this process, and he still needs to learn whether the town can spend funds in advance of the grant. It could be about 12-18 months before the project is fully-engineered and designed.

K. Sweeney asked about when we would request a bond vote.

- T. Leitz said the grant requires proof of funding for the whole project before the funds would be disbursed, which is mid-March.
- K. Sweeney asked about the full timeline if a bond vote passes.
  - T. Leitz said three to four years to completion. The timing of the bid for implementation can affect the timeline.

K. Sweeney asked for a reminder about how many inches of water we're trying to take off

- T. Leitz said we can expect about a foot of flood relief, which would cover all of Main street between the Rt 2 and Winooski St bridges once you consider the effects of backed-up storm drains.

M. Culbertson asked whether creating a green space for use after the project is done is part of the budget.

- T. Leitz said landscape architecture and replanting is a part of the project, and the National Parks Service is working with us for free through their rivers, trails, and conservation assistance program.

R. Clapp asked about a timeline on the Woody Avenue project.

- T. Leitz said because it is a planning grant, he's hoping it will be wrapped up in about an 18-month time frame. He hopes the outcome to be a project plan that is vetted by the public and selectboard to put out to bid.

G. Dillon expressed his concern about the parking on High Street and how it affects how long it takes him to get home in that neighborhood.

- He can't imagine a fire truck getting through. People should also not have such difficulty getting home or leaving the neighborhood.
- The worst part is at school pickup time. This kind of concern needs to be part of the planning.

K. Sweeney suggested the selectboard add a discussion about parking on High Street to the next agenda.

A. Johnson remarked she is excited to be walking through this process alongside the community, with transparency.

E. K. Hoffman said he saw the BRIC grant program is back on, and in case the selectboard didn't see that, he wanted to put it on their radar.

- T. Leitz said the town did submit a BRIC grant, and shortly afterwards, the program was killed. It might be worth trying again.

### **Stanley Wasson update**

T. Leitz indicated that tonight's executive session for real estate is about Stanley Wasson and the pre-development agreement.

- He hopes by early January they will be very close to making that a public document.
- He and A. Johnson are finalizing a response to the FOIA request about the agreement. These responses often require legal input and aren't as straightforward as they might seem in order to respond responsibly.

### **Continued 2026 budget review and discussion**

*Rereview of local option tax spending proposals*

#### Sheriff's statistics

The proposal includes \$75,000 to contract with the Washington County Sheriff for a 9-month program starting in March, with the public able to deliberate and vote.

- The concerns he hears from residents about policing refer largely to speeding concerns and a desire for officer visibility "on the beat."

Sheriff M. Poulin introduced himself and Captain B. Meyer, who summarized a report they compiled about incident statistics in Waterbury.

- They intend to focus on motor vehicle enforcement and quality of life, which means getting to know the community and being present.
- The VSP would deal with criminal investigations and a certain level of vehicular crashes.

### **Discussion**

R. Clapp asked for specificity on what the town would get for the \$75,000.

- M. Poulin said it would come down to direction from the town about what we want them to do, and he creates the shifts accordingly.

- The town would only pay for actual hours in Waterbury. The arrangement is flexible.
- B. Meyer said they work with other towns and if something serious happens in one of those towns, they will respond, but then return to Waterbury.

M. Poulin confirmed for R. Clapp that Waterbury would pay an hourly rate plus mileage.

M. Bard asked how they would address the traffic problems in Waterbury Center.

- B. Meyer said it would depend on the hours worked, and whether directing traffic is appropriate for the circumstances. A lot is situational.

K. Sweeney asked how their statistics were gathered.

- B. Meyers said they receive highway safety money to conduct traffic stops for seatbelts and so forth; they gather their data from these stops.

T. Taravella asked how specific the data is and whether that can help them determine the most useful shift times.

- M. Poulin said they have equipment to continue gathering data, including speeds; they do as much data-driven work as they can.

C. Viens said Route 100 shouldn't be the town's problem but the state's.

- M. Poulin noted that similar remarks have been made about Rt 2, and they ultimately take direction from the town.

R. Clapp pointed out that Cold Hollow Cider does pay for some traffic control at high volume times of year.

T. Leitz asked about having a point of contact to work with the sheriff's office.

- B. Meyer said the most effective approach is to determine a single point of contact.

K. Sweeney asked if the sheriff would issue tickets for municipal parking violations

- B. Meyer said they would issue tickets for whatever they are told to.

R. Clapp asked where the money goes for the tickets issued.

- B. Meyer said it depends on the ticket; state violations go to the state, and local violations will provide a percentage of fines to the municipality, depending on how the ordinance is written.

L. Scagliotti asked about the grant funding for highway safety and whether those services would still happen if the department contracted with the town.

- M. Poulin said those services are provided to all towns in the county, regardless of other contracts.

### LOT spreadsheet

T. Leitz summarized revisions he made to the LOT spreadsheet based on the December 1 selectboard conversation:

- The change in Randall Meadow project money, the addition of money for sidewalks, and suggested pay-off of the loan on a public works vehicle; paying that debt off in advance saves over \$13,000 in interest.
- He suggested cutting a check to ourselves from the tax stabilization fund to similarly pay off the fire town truck.
- Finally, he added \$15,000 to account for unanticipated costs in finalizing the Town Plan, which is a huge project.

**Motion by M. Bard to remove the tree inventory from the LOT and put that expense in the regular Town budget as a line item; seconded by K. Sweeney.**

**Discussion**

R. Clapp said if the tree inventory is going to be a one-time deal, why wouldn't we use the LOT.

- M. Bard said he worries about a number of potential one-time items that will creep into the LOT requests.
- K. Sweeney agreed that the inventory might not fit any of the LOT "buckets," and if we put it in the regular budget, the expense stays on the radar permanently and we just use an empty line item for the years when the inventory isn't needed yet.

B. Shepeluk said there shouldn't be a single line item in the budget because caring for the trees is more complicated and an ongoing expense.

No further discussion; **motion failed 5-3, with A. Johnson, R. Clapp, and T. Taravella voting against.**

#### **Additional discussion**

S. Sabin said she wants to be sure the Housing Trust Fund is separated as its own article.

A Marshall-Carney said the Planning Commission has some concerns with contractor performance and she wants to make sure there is a mechanism for managing contractor performance before more money is allocated to the Town Plan.

C. Viens asked for a repeat of what would be left in the LOT fund with this budget.

- T. Leitz said about \$100,000.
- C. Viens followed up with a suggestion that some money be used to boost the tax stabilization fund.

#### *Commission and committee budget requests*

##### Fire Department:

T. Leitz noted that changes in Duxbury's grand list affect what they pay us. The big expenditure comes in equipment, but G. Dillon does a nice job of managing those needs. There is low year-to-year growth in expenditures, about 3%.

G. Dillon talked about the command vehicle that would be paid for by LOT.

- It is replacing a 20-year-old truck that has been decent as long as there is space to turn it around. It was the only thing out there at the time, and it will continue to serve a purpose for someone, possibly Waterbury Backcountry or the Town.
- The new truck would have a smaller bed and is more functional for their needs.

#### **Discussion**

M. Bard asked about raising money with a coin drop.

- G. Dillon said that the fundraising tactic is extremely dangerous because of traffic.

R. Clapp asked about the price of the truck and the general increase in the equipment budget.

- G. Dillon first said he received advice from one of his officers that the truck will likely cost less than what is listed.
- Regarding the budget increase, he noted that last year they level funded, which means they are getting less for the same services. Equipment continues to go up in price.
- This year they didn't purchase as much in gear, which is a little concerning because they have to make some of that up.
- One thing they are working toward is having duplicate gear for everyone because once they return from a working fire, they shouldn't be wearing that same gear again until it is clean because of the lingering carcinogens.

A. Johnson asked about the increase in workers comp.

- T. Leitz said that is a formulaic cost.

A. Johnson asked for follow-up to better understand how the LOT money for debt reduction relates to the debt mentioned in the department budget.

K. Sweeney asked if the state pays the town for fire department responses on state highways.

- G. Dillon said unfortunately they do not.

C. Viens asked about highway calls volume.

- G. Dillon said they ebb and flow, but they have been on to the interstate more than normal in the past few months, for no apparent reason.

B. Shepeluk said part of the problem is probably early winter. He also noted that the budget should indicate the debt so that the calculation of what Duxbury should pay is accurate.

G. Dillon said he would also like to replace the tank truck, which is 8 years past due.

K. Sweeney asked if a bond for the truck would be on the Town Meeting warning.

- T. Leitz said not as of today; it isn't in the budget right now.
- A. Johnson asked for the Fire Capital Plan discussed at the June 30 selectboard meeting to be shared on the screen. In that plan the tanker is scheduled for 2026.
- G. Dillon said if he had to choose between the command vehicle and the tanker, for the sake of keeping the tax rate low, he would choose the tanker. The quote he has for it, ready to go, is \$414,407, all-inclusive.
- B. Shepeluk said the money can be borrowed for one of the trucks in 2026 and the payments worked into 2027.
- K. Sweeney strongly recommended putting the tanker truck before the voters on Town Meeting Day.
- S. Sabin asked if the old tanker would bring in any money at sale.
  - G. Dillon said it would bring in a little. He sold the last one for \$15,000, and this one would likely bring in less.

### Conservation Commission

A Marshall-Carney summarized the commission's objectives for the year, their Q4 accomplishments, and their 2026 Q1 plans [see spreadsheet linked above]. She reviewed the proposed budget for 2026:

- \$8,000 - the remaining dollars associated with the proposal related to Arrowwood.
- The printing line has increased from last year. The commission is working with the assumption that they will plan multiple education programs per year and are budgeting \$2,000 for that purpose.
- They are requesting funds to be seeded into the town conservation fund, in the amount of \$3,000, to support future land acquisition considerations.
- Total request is \$14,190.

### **Discussion**

K. Sweeney asked about land acquisition.

- A. Marshall-Carney said the commission isn't actively pursuing anything, but is thinking more about being prepared if the town finds it appropriate to support acquisition in its policies.

T. Leitz asked about the plan if the match for the MPG grant was reduced to statutory level instead of the \$8,000.

- A. Marshall-Carney said there is a reduced scope of work if that were to happen. If needed, she would reduce the allocation to the conservation fund to cover it.

R. Clapp asked if the commission works with the Waterbury Land Initiative.

- A. Marshall-Carney responded that the commission is partnering with WLI and is working to strengthen that relationship.

A. Johnson asked for clarification on the scope of work for the services budgeted for in this request.

- A. Marshall-Carney said the services are wall-to-wall, unlike the services they initially thought they would use from UVM students, which also cost far less.

T. Leitz confirmed that the \$8,090 could be paid over two years.

### Waterbury VT250 Committee

C. Casey summarized the charge of the VT250 planning committee and the membership.

- There is a page on the [town website](#) for the committee and they are looking to get a domain name for their own website for the next two years of events, [waterburyvt250.org](#). They will also establish dedicated social media accounts.
- Waterbury's history of organizing and hosting big events to mark similar historical anniversaries both for the town and the state are providing a guiding framework for this initiative. The historical society archives document these past commemorative projects.
- Besides hoping to fund the domain name and hosting of the website for two years, the committee is planning on promotional assets and event supply needs.
- There are a couple of small grant opportunities from the state and Vermont Humanities for 250th projects.
- The committee is requesting from the town \$3,500 to fund this effort.

### **Discussion:**

K. Sweeney clarified that the website hosting cost was for two years. Board members asked if the request was for two years in total.

C. Casey acknowledged the committee hasn't drilled down to the nuts and bolts of budgeting to be able to say if this budget is intended to cover the two years, with the exception of the website hosting.

- The reasoning behind the website is so that the initiatives don't get buried in all of the other information on the town site. Other committees and projects have created their own sites for similar reasons.

K. Sweeney recommended the request be put to the voters as a special article.

- T. Taravella said she is worried about not supporting a committee the board voted to create.
- R. Clapp said this committee is about community vitality, which would qualify for LOT money.
- A. Johnson brought up the fireworks funding, which is far more expensive than this request.

### *Continued review of municipal department budgets*

#### Reappraisal plan and reserve fund.

T. Leitz gave a high-level summary of the budget for the sake of time.

- He noted the grand list has consistently grown, at worst 0.7%. The expected growth is 1%
- There's about \$170K in the reappraisal fund and it would be odd not to tap into it during a reappraisal period.

R. Clapp asked if 51 S. Main is going to be added to the grand list.

- T. Leitz said yes, and it is likely going to be worth the most it will ever be because it won't be occupied the first year.

B. Shepeluk asked about the undesignated fund balance.

- T. Leitz said there is \$265K in the undesignated fund balance, and he's hesitant to use that fund to buy down the tax rate because of the Randall Meadow project, for which we don't yet have a home for 120 cubic yards of fill.
- B. Shepeluk followed up with suggestions about the tax stabilization fund.

Recreation was tabled for the next meeting.

**Review agenda items for next meeting**

Budget review - Recreation Department

Town Meeting study group

- R. Clapp reported that town moderator Rebecca Ellis agreed to serve on a committee to examine models for town meeting day.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

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

**Motion by K. Sweeney to enter into executive session and invite the municipal manager; seconded by T. Taravella.**

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

The selectboard entered into executive session at 9:40 p.m.

The Board exited executive session with the Town Manager at 10:08 pm.

**Motion by K. Sweeney to find that premature knowledge of personnel issues would place the Town of Waterbury at a substantial disadvantage; seconded by T. Taravella.**

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

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

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

The Board entered executive session at 10:11 pm.

The Town Clerk left the executive session at approximately 10:40 pm.

The Selectboard exited executive session at 11:18 pm.

**ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business, the selectboard adjourned at 11:18 pm.

**Next meeting of the Waterbury Selectboard:** Monday, December 22, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey.*