

Minutes of the Waterbury Selectboard Special Meeting
Budget Adjustment Day
Saturday, January 10, 2026 | 9:30 a.m.
American Legion Post #59 and via Zoom

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

Public attendance: ORCA Media, Chris Viens, Amy Marshall-Carney, Michelle Downing, Doug Gleason, Cheryl Gloor, Thomas Gloor, Steven Martin, Kathi Grace, Valerie Rogers, Carrie MacMillan, Lisa Scagliotti, Anne Imhoff, Gary Dillon

Zoom attendance: ORCA Media, Jeanne, Sandy Sabin, Evan Karl Hoffman

CALL TO ORDER 9:36 a.m. by A. Johnson

[AGENDA](#)

Motion by M. Bard to approve the agenda as presented; seconded by T. Taravella.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously 5-0.**

A. Johnson explained the purpose of the special meeting was to give the public an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft budget so that the selectboard can make additional edits before the official Town Meeting warning is due on February 1. There is a repeat of this budget presentation on Monday, January 12.

R. Clapp gave an update on the application for the Town Meeting study group.

- He has 5 applications so far and the board has authorized the appointment of 9 members.
- The deadline for applications is Monday.
- After Town Meeting, up to 4 additional appointments can be made.
- The first meeting of the committee is January 21, 7:30 p.m., in the Steele Community Room and on Zoom.

BUDGET REVIEW

[Local Option Tax draft budget](#)

A. Johnson explained the policy formally adopted in October 2025, and they are reviewing this budget first because it has implications for other areas of the budget.

T. Taravella summarized the budget and A. Johnson added that some of the items include funds authorized by voters in 2025 that are multi-year commitments, including the public works vehicle (tandem truck, as clarified by C. Viens).

Discussion

T. Gloor asked if there would be an option to develop a lend-lease program for the tandem.

- T. Taravella said that is not something the selectboard has talked about but will take into consideration.

R. Clapp said the funding for the natural disaster reserve fund is mostly for equipment, such as a new trailer that could transport necessary supplies to where it is needed.

- C. Gloor asked if there was a cost to where we store the trailer.
- K. Sweeney said the plan is to store the trailer on Woody Ave at the shed, then bring it down to the town offices in the event of impending flooding.

A. Johnson clarified that the reserve fund is for supplies that are needed to be replenished as used, and there is an additional line for one-time purchases, such as the trailer.

K. Grace asked if there was a policy for how to spend the natural disaster reserve fund.

- T. Taravella said that policy will be put on Monday's agenda.

T. Taravella presented the items budgeted under the affordable housing, economic development, and community vitality use area.

- A. Johnson gave further clarification on the FEMA buyout expenses, noting that some environmental mitigation might be needed before the town accepts the properties. The town was awarded Community Development Block Grants-Disaster Recovery money for planning the Woody Avenue project and for the Randall Meadow project.
- K. Grace said people need to be aware of the extent of the local option tax charges—it's not just hospitality and restaurants. The selectboard should also check whether the 05677 zip code
- A. Johnson said the four categories of local option tax are sales, meals, rooms, alcohol, on top of the state tax, and it is charged to all Waterbury residents as well as those who are visiting.
- M. Bard added that individual organizations looking for funds can only request funds through the special article process, no longer through LOT money.

Overall budget summary and department budgets

A. Johnson explained the board's mindset has been to find the balance between adequately funding municipal functions and account for the increase in taxes more generally, especially in education.

- The current budget has a proposed tax rate increase of 3.39%, which is generally consistent with inflation.
- She also explained the reduced PILOT payments having a major impact in the budget; our current common level of appraisal reduces value, so we received reduced funds accordingly. The reappraisal currently underway should address this problem.
- See [reappraisal plan and use of reserve](#)

K. Sweeney summarized the library budget as consistent with prior years.

- There has been turnover, which increases payroll for staff working more hours.

M. Bard summarized the Public Works budget and related capital expenses.

- Overtime is increased due to the experienced reality of challenging weather conditions.
- The price of road salt has increased 10% per ton. It is a limited supply.
- Local option tax funds the gravel resurfacing entirely, which makes a meaningful impact on the department budget.
- Less money is being sent to the capital fund; however, they are preparing to repave a number of roads.

R. Clapp summarized the Recreation and Parks budget.

- The major item is the pool, which has been a major expense consistently around \$60k.
- The local option tax proposes to purchase a new chlorination and filter system (\$150k) which is expected to extend the life of the very old pool, hopefully another 10 years at least. The cost of an entirely new pool is millions of dollars.
- Summer camp continues to be well funded, with decreased resources allocated to the after-school programs and mini-camps because they have been less popular.
- We have a new Rec Director, Erika Linskey, who has already started recruitment for the summer camp; additionally, there are candidates

Discussion

A. Imhoff said talk of a new pool has been deferred for at least 40 years, primarily because of cost. She asked if a capital fund can be established to start putting away money for a new pool instead of constantly replacing or finding a band-aid fix for failing parts.

- C. Viens said the department is running in the red by almost 400k. Although the pool is considered an asset to the town, it's going to take more than putting a little bit of money away each year to be able to replace it. Our goal should be to try to curb the department's budget deficit first.
- R. Clapp responded that the rec committee is also looking at another fairly major expense, a field house that would have indoor recreation opportunities as well as space for Town Meeting and other major gatherings. The cost estimate is \$8 million, which the selectboard chose not to put in the budget this year.

A. Marshall-Carney asked for clarification on line 35 and the math on actuals versus the budget.

T. Gloor asked if the town manager will be available for the Monday meeting to answer questions about the over-budget actuals.

K. Grace noted the cost of chlorine has skyrocketed and inquired if pool fees have been increased to mitigate some costs.

S. Martin said the selectboard is piling up invisible expenses as focus goes toward new things while older things crumble behind the scenes.

T. Taravella summarized the Planning and Zoning budget.

- No major changes. The focus is on completing the Town Plan in 2026, which includes using some LOT money for consultant fees in this process.

K. Sweeney summarized the Fire Department budget and related [capital funds](#).

- The budget increase is below inflation.
- Dispatching costs are increasing.

Discussion

G. Dillon asked if the total amount of the capital funds for each department can be provided, not just the amount being put into them each year.

- A. Johnson said the capital fund totals will be shared in the town report for Town Meeting.

K. Grace asked for clarification about which truck was bought last year (a mini-pumper) and what was not included this year (a pickup truck to carry supplies).

R. Clapp summarized the Public Safety budget

- We're in the second year of a three year contract with VSP, and there is a flat rate for all three years; no increase in that line.
- Waterbury is the only town that has this kind of contract. Renewing the contract will come with significant increases.
- The selectboard proposes using LOT funds to establish a contractual relationship with the Sheriff as a trial to see if there are alternative ways of addressing public safety that are also affordable.
- WASI funding proposes an 8% per capita, which they are proposing in every town they serve. It would be twice as expensive if the town absorbed the ambulance as a municipal service.

Discussion

C. Viens noted that these public safety expenses are still about a million dollars less than having our own police department.

M. Bard summarized the cemeteries budget and municipal building

- The goal in 2026 is to have a better focus on improved basic maintenance and beautification.
- There has been some major cooling and heating system maintenance over the last two years.
- It has been a struggle to move the card access system forward and the budget was increased to \$25k to try and get that done in 2026.
- The building cost to taxpayers is \$125k.

K. Sweeney summarized the Randall Meadow Bond Vote

- Securing the bond is a condition of receiving the grant money we were awarded for the project.
- T. Gloor asked if the bond vote is factored into the tax increase.
 - A. Johnson said no and explained the timing of this bond vote as dictated by the grant requirements, to secure the financing of the project by March 16.
 - In addition to the 2 million already awarded, the project will be eligible for up to another 1 million in grant funding. She does not anticipate having any debt issued in 2026, and there are several ways to address how we cover whatever debt is taken on as part of this project; the grant funding will be the first payer on anything with the project.
- M. Downing clarified her understanding that the actual debt incurred will be far less than what the bond covers. She is a former Randall St. resident and is excited about the project moving forward.
- K. Sweeney emphasized his position that this project is priority number one after three floods in a short period of time. He is hopeful we don't have to spend more than a quarter of this money if the bond is approved.

A. Johnson explained the next steps for finalizing the budget, the dates of upcoming meetings, and when the actual warning will be drafted.

M. Bard reminded the public that the opportunity to amend the budget in any way can still happen at Town Meeting; these review days don't lock in the budget for a vote.

General discussion

T. Gloor expressed concern about the analysis that goes into the decision that arrived at \$4 million dollars for a project to move dirt. He hopes there is due diligence around those costs. He also asked if the

selectboard looked at a way to stabilize the tax rate without an increase. Affordability is a real issue with the education tax being what it is.

- R. Clapp said part of the reason we kept the tax rate at zero last year was due to the increase in the education tax. The concern is that if we keep doing that, we're going to get hit in the face with inflation. That kind of increase is untenable.
 - Regarding Randall Meadow, the bond does allow us to start spending down the grant money while not obligating us to incur the debt at any particular point.
 - The project is a flood plain reconnection, the preferred methodology for flood mitigation because it doesn't impact downstream communities; this is why the state is interested in supporting this project with at least some grant money.

M. Bard agreed he doesn't want to see increases in his tax bill either. There is still time to adjust the budget and hearing from the taxpayers at these meetings gives the selectboard key information.

A. Johnson said a preliminary ROI analysis showed a 9-to-1 return, the highest of all the grant applicants in this category.

- Regarding buydown costs, one proposal suggested using some local option tax money that was allocated but not spent; the other was drawing down the fund balance. Further proposals are welcome.

S. Sabin asked if there is a match requirement for the Randall Meadow grant, or just the assurance of funding through a bond.

- A. Johnson said the latter is the case.

M. Downing said she appreciates how the rec department and the pool supports young families in particular.

- She asked where she can find data that compares the percent of the overall budget that goes to recreation compared to other towns. Recreation is an investment in a town's future.
- A. Johnson said recreation programming and funding varies greatly across communities and someone would have to gather the information.

V. Rogers reminded attendees that we don't yet own Randall Meadow.

- The SLR modeling study said water levels up to one foot may be reduced, which isn't site-specific data.
- She is confused by what the grant might not cover that we need 10K in the LOT budget.
- She asked that the grant application and award letter be made available.
- A. Johnson noted those documents are posted on the website.

S. Martin said retired seniors facing significant medicare costs are going to lose money each month.

- Everybody everywhere is absorbing costs and senior citizens are especially falling behind. He asked the town to keep the tax increase under the cost of inflation of 2.8%.
- The state of Vermont is basically unaffordable, and most grant money comes from the federal government, which has added billions to the national debt.
- Upcoming times are going to be really tough and we need to buckle down for the sake of our future.

D. Gleason said that one of the things that is evaluated in grant applications is funding commitment.

- Randall Meadow didn't receive the full grant request because there was no other source of funding indicated at the time.
- He wonders if there is a way to defer an expense to create a reserve fund for Randall Meadow.

G. Dillon said the truck he is looking to replace this year is a truck he needed to purchase 8 years ago.

- The truck is functional and safe, but also deteriorating.
- The new truck is a demo truck, found in an arrangement with a vendor in the St. Albans area who has trucks in line for departments to purchase, ready to go. It isn't outfitted with additional features, but it costs less to have those features added to a demo truck than ordering from the manufacturer with all of those bells and whistles off the assembly line.
- The more we push this purchase down the road, the more expensive any option is going to become.
- Some expenses are required under regulations—gear that is up to safety code, vehicle maintenance, and training.
- The tank truck replacements have been spread out as much as could be done at this time.
- Other than a pickup truck, he won't come back to the taxpayers for a while for another fire truck.
- There are costs to a municipality having two different fire stations. We have to be self-sufficient to some degree because there aren't enough resources collectively in the region to call on each other and guarantee a response.
- A. Johnson said there are ways to rethink some of the LOT budget that can still include the fire truck.
- G. Dillon explained that level funding means less stuff, because costs on supplies and other resources increase every year. Level funding only works for a year or so.

R. Clapp noted the 10,000 in the local option tax already for Randall Meadow. He asked D. Gleason what a more meaningful amount would be.

- D. Gleason said the more that line item is, the better it looks for future funding for the project. 10k is better than zero.
- T. Gloor clarified that D. Gleason is suggesting a funding stream over time.

S. Sabin said purchasing fire trucks does take several years. It's important to buy such vehicles when you can, and a demo truck is a great bargain.

- It's also important to keep the firefighters safe with the right gear and adequate available gear.
- Regarding recreation, Stowe shows a similar percentage of loss. Recreation isn't a money-maker but is a good thing for residents.

K. Grace said we keep talking about trying to find more money, but the number of organizations that are asking for free money with very little input is out of control.

- We don't seem to have any priorities on this issue. There are things that people are going to have to fund themselves. We give that money away too easily.
- K. Sweeney said it is a tradition for someone to petition their neighbors for money. Voters have the ability to vote no.
- A. Johnson said state statute requires municipalities to put these requests on the ballot as special articles if the organizations submit petitions with the required number of signatures by the deadline.
 - The selectboard has decided to clump together requests under 2,000.
 - Organizations requesting level funding are added to the warning without needing signatures; organizations that are requesting an increase or are adding a new request are asked by the selectboard to submit a petition.
 - This selectboard policy can be revisited.

- M. Bard said last year's ballot had \$58k in special articles, and this year is increased. He is concerned about these special articles and perhaps additional criteria are needed. We need to eliminate this creep.
- G. Dillon asked if everyone who was approved for money by special article last year then invoiced for the money. He also would like to see the organization have an official representative at Town Meeting to explain what the funding request is for.
 - A. Johnson doesn't have the information with her about who invoiced the town for their funding but can get it.
 - The selectboard also asked each requesting organization to have a representative speak to the request at Town Meeting.
- C. Viens recalled that during his ten years on the board, they worked within the confines of the tax rate. The rate was kept at .51 three years in a row and still accomplished more. Now the local option tax revenue has become the go-to-fund for everything.
 - His original thinking was that we wouldn't see a tax increase for at least a decade because of the LOT revenue; yet in the first year of the LOT, we're looking at a tax increase.
 - He is confused about why we're looking at an increase in the tax rate despite an additional million dollars in revenue annually we've never had before.
 - He doesn't believe there will be a reduction in cleanup efforts from flooding even with the Randall Meadow project. If voters do pass the bond, he will do what he can to keep the project costs of moving the dirt to another location down.
 - The LOT revenue source is going to eventually be needed to maintain what we already have.
 - He wants to see a zero percent increase; the taxpayers have to catch their breath.

A. Johnson noted that one of the key segments of the budget is payroll for staff to keep the town running, and that segment contains an increase of 3.5% for inflation and cost of living adjustments.

M. Bard said Stowe is raising their LOT rate from 1% to 2%, and we don't want to end up having that same discussion in Waterbury.

S. Sabin asked about posting the Zoom recordings of selectboard meetings.

- C. Casey said the video files are too large for them to live on our website but she is talking with Tom Leitz about establishing a town YouTube channel where all municipal meeting recordings can live.

Motion to adjourn by T. Taravella; seconded by K. Sweeney.

Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT at 11:39 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey.

Next meeting: January 12, 2026, 6:30 p.m. in the Steele Community Room.