

Minutes of the Waterbury Selectboard Special Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026 | 6:30 p.m.
28 N. Main St. and via Zoom

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

Public attendance: ORCA Media, Tom Gloor, Kenny Ryan, Carrie Macmillan, Peter Martel, Gary Dillon, Sally Dillon, Lisa Scagliotti, Evan Karl Hoffman, Bill Shepeluk, Skip Flanders

Zoom attendance: ORCA Media, Sandy Sabin, Anna Guber, Ian Shea, Natalie, Amy Marshall-Carney, Kia, Elizabeth Brown, Susan Titterton, Cynthia Parks, Evan Karl Hoffman, M. Roy, Michell, Rick Weston, bcolleran

CALL TO ORDER 6:32 p.m. by A. Johnson

AGENDAS

[Meeting agenda](#)

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the meeting agenda with the following modifications: move the 8:30 p.m. item to directly follow public comment, and to move the 7:00 p.m. item on budget review; seconded by M. Bard.

No further discussion; **motion approved unanimously, 5-0.**

Consent agenda [[Jan. 5, 2026 meeting minutes](#), [certificate of highway mileage](#), [CLA letter](#)]

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

No further discussion; **motion approved unanimously, 5-0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

M. Bard gave his thanks to the ORCA cameraman for being here at each meeting.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Update on municipal staffing and consider relevant agreements

T. Leitz summarized he has been having private conversations with selectboard members and EFUD commissions about ending his tenure here because he is unable to attain a work-life balance.

- Considering the needs of his family and budding teenage sons, along with some health issues, he found another opportunity.
- His contract requires a 90-day notification and he is requesting a release from that requirement to have Feb. 2 as his last day, which is 30-days' notice.
- T. Leitz summarized his most meaningful memories and takeaways from his time in Waterbury.

- He'll never forget the three floods, two of which happened on his birthday. Those disasters brought out the best of Waterbury, so despite the challenge, it was a meaningful experience personally and professionally.
- He feels good about the budgets that have been accomplished.
- He acknowledged there were challenges taking over from someone who had been in the position for a long time, but is glad his successor will not face those challenges.
- Other positive things include a modern employee handbook, the projects currently in the works, an ethics policy, and robust discussions about housing.
- He tried to work hard here to be closely aligned and coordinated with the selectboard and EFUD officials, especially to hold the line as a staff member, not as an elected official.
- To close, he's been in local government for more than 20 years. The level of civility has not gotten better, but he hopes that everyone knows the board members that serve the town, EFUD, cemetery, and the library really work hard and do their best. The public doesn't always see these things as easily, but their dedication should be commended.

Discussion

R. Clapp thanked T. Leitz for the time he spent in Waterbury and in getting important items over the line. M. Bard thanked T. Leitz for his tenure here both professionally and personally and hopes he can move past the rocky road of the last few months. He wished T. Leitz well in his future position.

S. Flanders seconded the comments made by R. Clapp and M. Bard and wished T. Leitz well.

C. Parks spoke as a citizen and as an EFUD commissioner, but not on behalf of EFUD.

- She thanked Tom for keeping water and sewer rates stable, and noted he was instrumental in securing \$2.8 million in grants for the East Wind pipeline project.
- She hasn't met any other municipal managers able to secure 100% grant money for an infrastructure project. His desire to tackle problems head-on is valued.
- The amount of time spent working with FEMA could not have been easy, and she appreciates his efforts.

R. Weston said he was sad to see Tom go, speaking also as a citizen and EFUD commissioner.

- He has seen only the highest professionalism and dedicated service to the municipality, echoing everything said by S. Flanders and C. Parks.
- He reminisced about the first time he met T. Leitz when Tom dropped off a dehumidifier during the 2023 flood.

A. Johnson admitted the timing of this is a little daunting, so she reached out to Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

- VLCT does both full recruitment services and can provide support for interim recruitment.
- She recommended to the board to enter into an agreement with VLCT for Bill Fraser, former Montpelier city manager, to conduct recruitment. This would provide the selectboard with additional support.

Motion by R. Clapp to approve the agreement with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns; seconded by K. Sweeney.

Additional discussion

M. Bard noted the agreement includes a \$90/hour rate.

T. Gloor asked if the ratification of the union agreement would happen while Tom is still in his position.

- T. Taravella said the union negotiations are expected to be wrapped up before Tom's departure.

- S. Flanders said EFUD expects the same.

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

A. Johnson presented the [letter of agreement](#) between the Town and Carol Dawes, who is providing support services in the Town Clerk's office through Town Meeting Day.

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the letter of agreement; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Budget Adjustment Day Part 2

- Budget - [Local Option Tax](#)
- Budget - [Capital Funds](#)
- Budget - [Reappraisal Reserve](#)
- Budget - [Summary and Departmental Budgets](#)

A. Johnson noted the additional document of the [2024 fund balances](#), which had not been available for the Saturday morning meeting.

- She gave a summary of the work timeline, noting that the warning needs to be finalized by February 1.
- She gave background on the adoption of the local option tax policy.

T. Taravella summarized the budget for the LOT allocations, by category of approved uses.

- A note on the natural disaster reserve fund: That reserve fund will be warned as its own item for voters to approve its creation, and the LOT allocation would fund it. The inventory request in a separate category is for up-front costs of a trailer and other one-time costs that can move the supplies funded and re-supplied through the reserve fund.

A. Johnson summarized the budget for general government.

- A note on reduced PILOT payments: Our common level of appraisal currently reduces value, so we receive less funding for state-owned buildings. We are currently undergoing reappraisal, so that situation should be improved in the future.
- See [reappraisal reserve budget](#)

K. Sweeney summarized the library budget.

- It is consistent with prior years.
- Total expenses are increased at the level of inflation.

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

- A note on overtime: The increase reflects the reality of very challenging weather conditions affecting our infrastructure.
- Less is being sent to the capital fund, but paving costs for the upcoming year are significant.

R. Clapp summarized the Recreation and Parks budgets

- The Rec budget looks similar to past budgets.

- A note on the pool: Bottom line is that keeping it going means budgeting about \$55k. Improvements made over the past year have proven successful in reducing leakage, so we are optimistic it has a number of years left in it.
- The new Rec Director has started and there are some good candidates for Deputy Rec. Director.
- After school programs and mini-camps will hopefully resume under the new Deputy Rec. Director.

T. Taravella summarized the Planning and Zoning budget.

- A. Johnson acknowledged that the Planning Commission had to relocate to the front room of the complex to hold their regular meeting, and she appreciates their flexibility as they continue to work hard on finishing the new Town Plan.
- T. Taravella continued that the budget focus is on finishing the Town Plan, including using some LOT money to assist with consultant fees.

K. Sweeney summarized the Fire Department budget.

- Note the increase is below inflation.
- G. Dillon added that the majority of costs are related to rules and regulations of the state. Equipment has to be tested and has an expiration date. Protective gear is not cheap, but it must pass safety tests.

R. Clapp summarized the public safety budget.

- A note on the contract with VSP: Waterbury is the only town of comparable size to have such a contract. For the three years of the contract, the rate remains flat. If the contract is renewed for 2027, we should expect a substantial increase.
- The LOT allotment for the Sheriff's office is to try out how such an arrangement might work.
- The WASI funding is increasing 8% because of staffing increases needed to provide a high level of service to the community.

M. Bard summarized the Cemeteries and Municipal Building budgets.

- A note on the card access system: We've struggled to move forward on this item because the costs have increased significantly since we first began looking into it.

Discuss Randall Meadow bond vote and preparation

[\[grant award letter here\]](#)

On the Randall Meadow bond vote, K. Sweeney said the selectboard approved the warning for \$4.3 million because getting the \$2 million grant money requires showing we have access to funding for the full project.

- That does not mean we will incur that much debt, and the current grant award along with any future grant money would be the first payers on the project before any debt is issued.

A. Johnson summarized the next steps for the budget process.

T. Leitz pointed out that because the grand list isn't finalized until the end of June, the current tax rate is conservative with the expectation that the grand list will grow from last year and lower the tax rate of 3.3% proposed in the current budget to 3%.

Discussion

R. Clapp asked if the budget for the LOT expenses is based on the amount we collected this year or projected amount for next year.

- T. Leitz said it is a conservative estimate based on what we collected last year. The money comes to us quarterly. Most of the LOT money is based on retail sales, which have historically risen about 4%. Robust growth can be counted on compared to the historic rise in the Town's tax rate.
- R. Clapp also confirmed that the town will receive 75% of the tax instead of 70%.

B. Shepeluk asked about the contract with the VSP and A. Johnson clarified that the contract uses the state's fiscal year.

S. Sabin asked about the amounts in the quarterly payments of LOT revenue.

- A. Johnson said these numbers are posted [on the website](#).

C. Viens noted that the paving to Kneeland Flats and Ripley is just the curve to Ring Rd.

T. Gloor commented on the significant bump in funding to WASI and wanted to know if it was the approved number.

- A. Johnson said the 8% is what the selectboard decided to put in the draft budget.
- T. Leitz said the WASI budget isn't driven by the cost of the building; the building is paid for.
 - The budget is driven by the services they offer.
 - They have a good revenue strategy but need to fund growth in personnel, especially EMTs. It's a growing pain period for the organization.
 - The increases have been dramatic in recent years, but there is context: For a long time, WASI charged the town very little, not even keeping up with the cost of inflation. It then experienced funding challenges, followed by significant revenue gain by covid grants. They really should have been doing reasonable increases along the way.
- B. Shepeluk agreed with T. Leitz's assessment of the relationship between WASI and the town over the years.
 - There are reasons why the numbers have increased dramatically.
 - The rental agreement on the building in Waterbury Center is a loss of revenue to the Town and used to offset what we paid for their services.
 - We're ultimately getting a bargain compared to running municipal ambulance services.

C. Viens asked for elaboration on the potential impacts of reappraisal, especially with regards to PILOT funding.

- T. Leitz said the PILOT fund is funded with a portion of LOT money kept by the state. The payments are based on the insurance value of properties in a town. It's an odd mechanism that the PILOT payment is based on the CLA. This would be a good topic for our local delegation to the legislature to stay on top of.
- Regarding the reappraisal, in theory, it's not supposed to impact things for property owners. Generally, as property values go up across the board, taxes go down. The only thing that can mess up that "rule of thumb" is if there is a particular outlier property that disproportionately affects the formula. He's not aware of any seismic change in our values that would cause that kind of problem.

Consider appointments to Town Meeting Study Committee

[applications [here](#) and [here](#)]

A. Johnson gave thanks to Clerk Beth Jones who gathered more applications to add for tonight's consideration.

- There are now a total of 8 applications, and the selectboard approved the appointment of up to 9 members tonight and an additional 4 after Town Meeting Day, when more people might become aware of the committee.

R. Clapp said in addition to these 8 members, Town Moderator Rebecca Ellis would chair the committee.

- He noted the applicants all provided a cover letter and summary of relevant experience, and he believes the current applicant pool provides a diversity of viewpoints and experience, as desired by the selectboard. He would serve as the selectboard liaison in an *ex officio* basis.
- The applicants are: Valerie Rogers, Liz Schlegel Stevens, Kathryn Grace, Evan Karl Hoffman, Amy Marshall Carney, Michelle Downing, Anne Imhoff, and Susan Titterton.

Motion by R. Clapp to appoint the names just listed and Rebecca Ellis to serve on the Waterbury Town Meeting Study Committee; seconded by K. Sweeney.

Discussion

E. Hoffman stated he is excited about the opportunity to participate on this committee.

- R. Clapp noted E. Hoffman has done a considerable amount of research on Town Meeting.

S. Titterton thanked the selectboard and said she is looking forward to the opportunity.

R. Clapp said the first meeting is on January 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the Steele Community Room

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

Motion by M. Bard to appoint R. Clapp as the liaison to the Town Meeting Study Committee; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

R. Clapp stated his willingness to serve in that capacity.

Winterfest special event permit and road closure

[\[permit application and memo here\]](#)

C. Casey summarized the event, the co-sponsorship and participation of the businesses affected by the road closure, and that all alcohol service would take place only on licensed establishments' properties.

- T. Taravella asked about security and other notifications.
 - R. Clapp said the homeowners and VSP would be notified.
 - G. Dillon said there is no concern from the Fire Department.

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the permit for Jan. 30; seconded by T. Taravella.

No further adjustment; **motion passed 4-0 with 1 abstention (R. Clapp)**

Motion by T. Taravella to approve the road closure as proposed, in light of the Fire Chief's approval and the notification planned for residents; seconded by M. Bard.

No further adjustment; **motion passed 4-0 with 1 abstention (R. Clapp)**

Review of potential budget changes from Budget Adjustment presentations

T. Taravella said she liked the idea of starting to build a fund for pool replacement.

- T. Leitz said there is a capital improvement fund for recreation, but historically it has been pretty small. It's a great endeavor, but the question is how much you would want to put toward that fund to start.

- T. Taravella said she didn't have a number in mind, but something is better than nothing.
- M. Bard said there was loud public sentiment to keep the budget net zero or at the rate of inflation. He's not sure adding money to build a fund for a pool is the best budget decision.

K. Sweeney wondered if there was a way to chip out \$75 - \$100k for either debt reduction or capital improvement from the tax stabilization fund.

- T. Leitz said it is certainly possible. His thought is that the fire department fund balance can be used toward the fire truck and that frees up the LOT funds.
- He cautioned against making a habit of using LOT funds to pay for the operating budget.

A. Johnson asked about the undesignated fund balance; T. Leitz offered the same answer, adding that using the fund balance to lower the tax rate will need to be paid off the following year.

R. Clapp said he is sensitive to the fact that there are a number of residents on fixed incomes, so he would be more comfortable with a 3% increase if we can get there.

- In regard to the pool, the rec committee looked pretty carefully at replacing the pool; the consensus was to spend on maintaining the current pool and not expect a new pool any time soon.

M. Bard said we should have some criteria for what should be in special articles in order to rein in those requests, in response to concerns raised at Saturday's meeting.

- T. Taravella said state law allows any 501(c)3 to get on the ballot if they obtain the necessary number of signatures. The only thing the selectboard can do is decide how to present the special articles (group them, have individual articles, etc.)
- T. Gloor said his concern about budget request creep is how they are often grouped together.

K. Sweeney said the selectboard bought town the tax rate last year and is thinking about buying down the tax rate to 3% this year; eventually this is going to catch up to us.

- Matching the rate of inflation is probably as low as we can go. He is open to the suggestion of using the fire department fund balance to pay off some of the truck debt.
- T. Gloor added his concern about relying on LOT because that tax hits residents, too.

C. Viens said T. Taravella's proposal (re: the pool fund) was honorable, but it's all about priorities.

- The challenge is deciding when to pull the trigger, as the cost of installing a new pool only increases, as does the cost of everything else.
- He encouraged the selectboard to stop committing more than we can commit to, and then set targets for funding those commitments. We can't be all things to all people.

G. Dillon noted we have the Reservoir for recreation, so there is an option for people to go and it would probably cost the town a lot less to bring kids there.

- There doesn't seem to be as many people using the pool now as there used to be.
- R. Clapp noted that the reservoir itself is going to be drawn down in 2028, and will be down for about 2 years while they do repairs to the dam.

B. Shepeluk said he was asked about upgrading the pool some time in the 1990s, and the assumption was the pool was ready to collapse.

- Even though the pool has gone through some larger maintenance projects, he thinks it's going okay.

- It doesn't make sense to tax people now for a project that might be needed 10 or 15 years in the future.
- A zero percent increase in the tax rate is too much; there is enough money in the unrestricted general fund balance to keep the budget aligned with inflation.

A. Johnson gave T. Taravella credit for making a proposal that addressed feedback calling for planning for the future.

K. Sweeney said he would like to revisit S. Sabin's suggestion of moving the housing trust fund into a proper fund.

A. Johnson said the policy for creating and using a natural disaster reserve fund needs to be crafted.

M. Bard reiterated his desire to keep the tax rate no higher than 2.7%.

- T. Leitz said about \$28,000 would have to be cut out of the budget (or added in revenue) to get to 2.7%.

T. Gloor asked if there are lines that won't be fully allocated in 2025 that can be passed to 2026.

- T. Leitz will follow up on that question.

On the Randall Meadow bond vote—

- R. Clapp will obtain background information from Dana Allen to better inform the public.
- M. Bard emphasized that federal grant funding rules require us to show we can obtain funding for the project, but we ultimately may never have to spend a dime. Bonding for a certain amount doesn't mean we have to actually incur that amount of debt.
- P. Martel asked if we would be on the hook for the full \$4.3 million dollars if the grant funding were suddenly pulled.
 - K. Sweeney and M. Bard said we aren't obligated to issue the debt at all.
 - R. Clapp said the project would be re-evaluated if the grant money were somehow pulled.
- A. Johnson said just to do grant compliance is a full-time job, and administrative time is built into the project cost.

Municipal manager and Board member updates

M. Bard said he discussed the issue of zoning violations and how they need to be enforced with the DRB.

- Our bylaws allow us to fine property owners for violations. We need to support the zoning administrator and municipal manager in enforcement.

R. Clapp repeated the Waterbury Winterfest information, January 28 - February 1.

A. Johnson said she cannot attend the housing task force meeting this week, but K. Sweeney will attend remotely.

Review agenda items for next meeting and future meeting schedule

Municipal staffing update

Budget revisions

Special articles 2025 and 2026

DRB and zoning violations

Event permit review and approval

Bond vote updates

Policy for natural disaster reserve fund

Review selectboard report for Town Report

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

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

Motion by K. Sweeney to enter executive session; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

The selectboard entered executive session at 8:55 p.m.

The selectboard exited executive session at 9:15 p.m.

Motion by K. Sweeney to release the town manager Tom Leitz from the 90-day clause in his employment contract; seconded by T. Taravella

Friendly amendment from R. Clapp to add that T. Leitz would be released from employment on February 2. K. Sweeney accepted the amendment.

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

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

Motion approved unanimously, 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT, 9:17 p.m.

Next Meeting of the Waterbury Selectboard: **Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – 6:30 pm

***Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 6:30 p.m. – special meeting
to finalize the warning for Town Meeting.

Minutes respectful submitted by Cheryl Casey.