

Minutes of the Waterbury Selectboard Special Meeting
Tuesday, January 27, 2026 | 7:00 p.m.
28 N. Main St. and via Zoom

[Watch [Zoom recording](#) | passcode: %73Zf%*X]

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

Public attendance: ORCA Media, Chris Viens, Cheryl Gloor, Tom Gloor, Valerie Rogers, Bill Shepeluk, Ben Habel, Evan Karl Hoffman, Lisa Scagliotti, Dana Allen

Zoom attendance: ORCA Media, Anne Imhoff, Jamie, Cassidy Myers, Amy Marshall-Carney, Billy Vigdor, Finn Lester-Niles, Carrie MacMillan, Sandy Sabin, Joe Camaratta, Kenny Ryan, Doug Greason, Maria Mable, Rebecca Mead

CALL TO ORDER 7:00 p.m. by A. Johnson

AGENDA

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the agenda with the addition of the Black Cap Workers United event permit and the letter of support for trail grants for Revitalizing Waterbury, both just before the 8:50 agenda items; seconded by M. Bard.

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously, 4-0, with R. Clapp not yet present .**

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

No further discussion; **motion passed unanimously, with R. Clapp not yet present.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

M. Bard cheered on the New England Patriots.

T. Taravella acknowledged that there are still some challenges with the ORCA recordings and sound, but C. Casey will be putting the link to the Zoom recording in the posted minutes.

C. Viens asked about the amount of sand the Town has used and what it cost, given the cold temperatures and recent storm. B. Woodruff said he will find out the information.

E. Hoffman said he has been hearing complaints about the state of the sidewalks downtown. They haven't been cleared very well and it's still rough walking out there.

- B. Woodruff said some of the difficulty is short-staffing; sidewalks take a back seat to the roads when we don't have enough people to cover. He has a meeting with the Highway Foreman to address the situation.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Review allowable uses for proposed Natural Disaster Reserve Fund

No revisions from the selectboard.

Motion by T. Taravella to adopt the allowable uses of the Natural Disaster Reserve Fund as presented; seconded by R. Clapp.

Discussion

T. Leitz said he added infrastructure to the allowable uses because there were some infrastructure projects that FEMA did not reimburse for after recent flood events.

T. Gloor said the late posting of meeting documents beyond the agenda is not transparent. He also asked about the decision process for using the fund.

- T. Taravella said the selectboard and municipal manager would make the decision with recommendations from the Natural Disaster Reserve Committee.
- R. Clapp added that the committee would be an important voice in the decision-making process. He complemented Tori on the drafting of this policy.

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

Review allowable uses for Housing Trust Fund

K. Sweeney said this article allows the fund to become a reserve fund, which it has not yet been officially designated.

Discussion

R. Clapp asked if there was a legal review of this language and whether that would be appropriate.

- T. Leitz said “ghost” article 12 in the warning (housing trust fund) mimics the language used for the natural disaster reserve, which was approved by counsel.
- T. Taravella wondered if the “ghost” article 12 would serve the same purpose and render this language unnecessary.
 - K. Sweeney agreed.

V. Rogers said \$175k is a lot to put in that fund. The home improvement grant program has had low demand.

- There are competing priorities, and flood mitigation is more important than future housing right now.
- The natural disaster reserve fund should get some of that money.

B. Vigdor said the housing reserve fund is a good idea. The amount already allocated won’t even move the needle on building future housing. What we really need is workforce housing, whereas “affordable” housing might be a misleading term, regarding legal definitions.

- K. Sweeney responded that in his mind, “affordable” is 30% or less of a person’s income, which would include workforce housing. Building anything at a large scale, especially with rentals, is a way to stabilize the climb of rents.
- J. Camaratta said the allowable uses document gives a definition of affordable housing as the Housing Task Force is using it. He asked what changes by making this fund a reserve fund.
 - T. Leitz said the allowable uses are restricted to the language of the article. Operationally, the funds can be spent at the future direction of the selectboard; voters only determine whether to create and fund the reserve. The language in the warning contains some

nuance that doesn't necessarily render the current allowable uses moot. The level of nuance around what definition of "affordable" is applicable is a legal question.

- K. Sweeney said "affordable" is already defined by the HUD definition.
- A. Johnson said our own program adopted a different definition from HUD, so we need to ensure we are clear. If this is approved without clarity, we can't undo it.

S. Sabin suggested the following article language: "*Shall the Town of Waterbury vote to use \$__ of previously received Local Option Tax (LOT) funds to create a separate reserve fund to be known as the Housing Trust Fund? Said fund shall be used to support housing initiatives and incentives for Waterbury residents and homeowners, as proposed by the Waterbury Housing Task Force and approved by the Select Board.*"

- T. Leitz said he strongly opposes the language because state law is clear that the selectboard controls the purse strings.

C. Gloor agreed there is a nuance between workforce housing and affordable housing. The former group doesn't make enough to buy their own home but makes too little to get subsidized housing.

C. Viens questioned the terms "initiatives" and "incentives," which seem far too general. He also asked how this reserve fund aligns with the new Town Plan in the works, and whether that plan can help inform the article language.

T. Taravella suggested referencing the current document of allowable uses in the warning article.

- T. Leitz noted that the policy of allowable uses can be changed by future selectboards.

T. Gloor suggested bringing the discussion back to the question: What is the problem we are trying to solve right now? The article should be simple and straightforward.

A. Johnson recommended moving to a discussion of the Town Meeting warning, which will ultimately resolve the question of an article on this reserve fund.

Review and consider approving Town Meeting warning, including:

- **Reserve funds**
- **Municipal budget, including local option tax**
- **Organizational funding requests**

A. Johnson said the town attorney has reviewed the warning, and she has gone over it with T. Leitz and Town Moderator Rebecca Ellis.

T. Leitz explained the changes to article 9.

- Town counsel suggested the article reflect everything in the budget, except for local option tax items and organization requests for funding (articles 15+).
- Two separate articles for operations budget and capital funds can result in contradictions for the tax rate.

Discussion

R. Clapp said he supports identifying the estimated tax rate in the warning because it makes things a bit more transparent.

A. Johnson confirmed that the estimated tax rate is a 2.7% increase.

M. Bard agreed with how article 9 is now framed.

E. K. Hoffman brought up the confusing language in article 9 about how the capital fund is funded.

- C. Casey recommended adding a comma in the relevant segment, which contains two independent clauses: "...and \$478,000 in capital expenses of which \$478,000 is funding through a

general fund transfer, and \$5,000 is funded from non property tax revenues,” with the comma added after “transfer.”

B. Shepeluk said the town isn’t “raising” money from non-property tax revenue sources, and would prefer something like “anticipated from.”

- The Board expressed agreement with that change.

For the “ghost” article(s) about the housing reserve, K. Sweeney suggested the selectboard cement the language of the current allowable uses policy as tied to this article and reference this policy in the town report.

- J. Camaratta shared the policy document on screen to clarify the previously approved definition of affordable housing and uses of the housing trust fund.
- M. Bard said having a vibrant housing trust fund is critical to our community.

T. Taravella proposed to accept the language, as modeled after the natural disaster reserve article and subject to legal review, and to reaffirm the allowable uses.

A Johnson suggested removing “for residents both current and future” and replacing it with “as defined in the housing

For the second article on the fund, K. Sweeney and T. Taravella proposed the full amount currently in the fund.

T. Leitz said the \$75,000 approved by the voters is a good idea, but the initial allocation of \$100,000 has gotten a lot of pushback; he recommended treading carefully regarding that amount.

- K. Sweeney said the initial funding was unexpected and the selectboard had the authority to allocate the money as they saw fit.

B. Shepeluk suggested language that essentially split the difference by suggesting the \$75,000 and \$100,000 as separate clauses in the article. This is a housekeeping measure to get the money into a reserve.

Motion by M. Bard to accept this proposal and language; seconded by K. Sweeney.

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

- B. Shepeluk added that at some future point, the selectboard can go back to the voters to replenish the fund or put grant money in the fund.

The selectboard considered draft article 14 options A and B.

- M. Bard said he likes option B because it makes the article transparent. T. Taravella agreed, but with the total local option tax expense worked into the language.
- K. Sweeney said everyone will have the town report in their hand and can look up the local option tax line items. R. Clapp agreed, respecting the preference of the Town Moderator.
- T. Gloor said if organization requests are all listed out, then this spending should be as well.
- R. Clapp said the only difference between the options is whether the moderator has to read through the list three times. The information will still be in the town report, and people can be asked to turn to the correct page.
- A. Johnson broke the tie with her decision for a bulleted list.

Draft articles 15+ are in alphabetical order and not descending order of amount of request, per the recommendation of temporary assistant town clerk Carol Dawes.

T. Leitz recommended a special meeting to confirm the final language. A. Johnson agreed and summarized the updates to be made, per the discussion.

Discuss town report and other Town Meeting Day considerations

A. Johnson confirmed there will be lunch from the Senior Center, by donation. She will also reach out to see if childcare is possible from The Children's Room.

Update on current and potential flood mitigation projects and grants, including Randall Meadow bond vote

T. Leitz said there are several requirements for the Randall Meadow and Woody Ave. grants

- a document stating that the money will not go towards any action that displaces low-income residents
- a document affirming anti-discrimination practices. These are essentially compliance documents.

The other key document is a [primer on the Randall Meadow bond vote](#).

D. Allen, flood resilience grants manager/contractor, gave [an update on the projects](#) he has been working on: Randall Meadow floodplain reconnection, Woody Avenue Housing planning, town-wide flood study planning, and Union Street housing acquisition and redevelopment project.

- The town-wide flood study is under the umbrella of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. We are a subsection of the larger planning grant application. It will create a pipeline for additional funding for design/implementation, such as grants from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.
- A pre-application has been submitted for the Union Street housing acquisition project, and the town was invited to submit a full application.
 - There are two properties in FEMA buyout limbo and the town is considering a project that would build affordable housing above flood level.
 - Zoning regulations and flood hazard regulations would make it possible to undertake this kind of project if funding is available.
 - A public meeting will need to be warned by Feb. 7 and the meeting held by Feb. 22 if the application is to be submitted by the deadline of Feb. 27.
 - We're likely looking at \$4,000-\$5,000 to pay a consultant to pull this application together.
- All of these projects fall under Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grant opportunities.
- The planning grants are held to 5-6 year windows, but it is preferable to complete the planning in a shorter amount of time. Implementation grants are the next step.

Discussion

C. Viens asked what the \$2 million in funding would go toward.

- D. Allen said property acquisition, demolition costs, construction costs, and administration costs. The housing would be offered under Downstreet Housing's shared equity program. Homebuyers would ultimately cover part of the construction costs.

C. Viens asked what the ultimate goal is.

- D. Allen said the goal is to keep the properties on the grand list as well as give someone a viable option to purchase. Otherwise, these properties are condemned and the owners want out. This project ensures two flood-safe units come out of all of this. Unfortunately, they aren't contiguous properties.

D. Allen asked the Selectboard about the appetite to push the Union Street project forward.

- A. Johnson expressed concern about the timing but is excited about the project idea.

- T. Taravella noted we have a lot on our plates already, as much as she loves the project.
- R. Clapp said Randall Meadow and Woody Avenue are already big lifts, especially with the bond vote not yet a fait accompli. The cost-benefit for the Union Street project isn't compelling at this time.
- K. Sweeney agreed, noting he was breaking his own heart a little bit.
- M. Bard added his agreement.
- A. Johnson noted that the staff recommendation was to let this project go because there is too much going on in this time of both staff and selectboard transition.
- D. Allen said the developer might be willing to take on the grant application, even though the town is obviously the strongest applicant.

C. Gloor wondered if there would be an opportunity to apply for this grant next year or at a later date.

- D. Allen said he suspects yes, but if either or both of the buyouts go through in the meantime, the project is dead in the water.
- C. Viens said it might be worth reaching out to one of our congressional delegates to try and convince FEMA to turn the property over to the town.

Consider collective bargaining agreement

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by T. Taravella that premature knowledge of contracts would place the Town of Waterbury at a significant disadvantage; seconded by K. Sweeney.

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

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

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

The selectboard entered executive session at 9:16 p.m.

The selectboard exited executive session at 9:38 p.m.

Motion by R. Clapp to approve the collective bargaining agreement and to sign a clean copy when available within the next 48 hours; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

REGULAR BUSINESS CONTINUED

Review and consider adoption of updated special event permit

A. Johnson suggested tabling this item and the selectboard was in agreement.

Letter of support for Revitalizing Waterbury's trail pathways planning grant application

R. Clapp recused himself from discussion as a selectboard member but said he could answer any questions in his capacity as executive director of Revitalizing Waterbury.

T. Taravella requested the actual letter and not a template.

The selectboard agreed to take up this item at the next special meeting.

Review and approval of Black Cap Workers United event permit

B. Habel described the event as a celebration of the one year anniversary of Black Cap Workers United union. The community has been very supportive and the union members hoped to be able to celebrate with community members. Because of the snow, the event would probably spill out of the park into the street in front of Black Cap Cafe. The request is for a road closure of Rotarian Place.

Discussion

T. Leitz said there might be sufficient open space in the park because substantial swaths will be cleared this week for Winterfest events.

K. Sweeney asked about live music.

- B. Habel said either a small band or someone playing guitar.
- T. Taravella said the

R. Clapp asked if there were any union members who were Waterbury residents.

- B. Habel said no, but the community has been very supportive. The picketing events will be ongoing, so the union members will be out there anyway.

T. Leitz recommended reaching out to the Rec Director to reserve the park.

Motion by R. Clapp to table this permit until more details have been provided; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Municipal manager and Board member updates

A Johnson has been busy in meetings about the town report and warning.

R. Clapp said the new Rec Director has joined the Winterfest planning group. Winterfest starts tomorrow and runs through Sunday. More information is available on the RW calendar and waterburywinterfest.com.

T. Taravella said the Tree Board is going to reapply for certification for Tree City USA.

- They will also be deciding on the location of their annual Arbor Day celebration and the tree they will plan.
- Rotary is having Pie for Breakfast on February 14.
- She also thanked Alyssa for going through the collective bargaining agreement so closely.

K. Sweeney said he has formally accepted a job with the American Federation of State and City Municipal Employees as a field representative.

T. Leitz:

- Duncan MacDougall submitted a grant application to the Vermont Small Scale Highway Safety Program
- Francine Chittenden is working with town staff to complete
- The town has hired Sam Grandfield as assistant recreation director. He is a volunteer firefighter and has been working seasonally with the highway department.

Review agenda items for next meeting

Special meeting scheduled for 9:00 a.m., January 29.

- Town meeting warning
- Letter of support for RW
- Sign final copy of the collective bargaining agreement

Regular meeting, Monday, Feb. 2:

- Stowe Land Trust
- Event permit application update
- Final review of Town Report
- Black Cap Workers United event permit.

Motion by K. Sweeney to adjourn; seconded by M. Bard.

ADJOURNMENT, 10:04 p.m.

Next meeting of the Waterbury Selectboard: Monday, February 2, 2026, 6:30 p.m.,

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cheryl Casey