

Minutes of the Waterbury Selectboard Special Meeting
Monday, January 20, 2026 | 6:30 p.m.
28 N. Main St. and via Zoom

[Watch [Zoom recording](#) passcode: QP@+Y69P]

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

Public attendance: ORCA Media, Bill Woodruff, Chris Viens, Evan Karl Hoffman, Peter Martel, Lisa Scagliotti, Martha Staskus

Zoom attendance: ORCA Media, Sandy Sabin, Maureen White, Valerie Rogers, Anne Imhoff, carrie MacMillan

CALL TO ORDER 6:34 p.m. by A. Johnson

AGENDAS

Motion by T. Taravella to approve the written agenda; seconded by K. Sweeney.
No further discussion; motion passed unanimously.

T. Taravella requested ORCA Media look into the sound issue for their recording of the January 12 select board meeting.

Motion by K. Sweeney to approve the consent agenda as written; seconded by T. Taravella.
No further discussion; motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

S. Sabin reiterated her request that the Zoom meetings be uploaded to the website. T. Leitz said a link to the Zoom recording can be put in the meeting minutes.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Update on municipal staffing

A. Johnson announced that Bill Woodruff, Public Works Director, has agreed to serve as interim town manager while a search for a new manager is underway.

- B. Woodruff said he is excited and happy to help out to support some consistency during the interim period.

T. Leitz reported the Library has filled the circulation assistant position, and today he made an offer to a deputy director of Recreation.

Randall Meadow [bond vote primer](#)

T. Leitz thought it would be good to have a summary for the public to review before the vote. He thanked Dana Allen for providing the map.

Discussion

T. Taravella asked how the content would be disseminated and recommended some formatting changes.

- T. Leitz listed the usual outlets, including Front Porch Forum, the Roundabout, the town website and newsletter, as well as Facebook.

R. Clapp said a public meeting in advance of Town Meeting would help let people better understand the issue.

- T. Taravella noted the warning already announces this public meeting: February 17.

A. Johnson suggested a compendium with the spectrum of options for how the debt might ultimately affect property taxes. T. Leitz said he did offer the worst case scenario in the information, and also described

R. Clapp asked when excavation would begin if the bond passes.

- T. Leitz said studies would take up to 18 months and excavation would likely begin in 2029.

M. Staskus asked for the period of time to be approximated for how long the project would last once the excavation begins.

- T. Taravella said that is tricky because projects are weather-dependent. We also don't have full understanding until the studies are all done.
- T. Leitz said a contractor is going to want to do the project as quickly as they can.
- T. Taravella suggested a tweak to the last sentence of the "Risks and Downsides" section of the document to address this topic.

P. Martel said the flood relief estimate of between 4 inches and 1 foot refers to a 50-year flood, and that should be clarified.

- T. Leitz said the full analysis completed as part of the upcoming project will tweak numbers, so he was hesitant to get too specific.
- A. Johnson said it was appropriate to give detail for the modeling that was used to provide this stage of data.

L. Scagliotti confirmed that the information would be included in the Town Report.

C. Viens asked if there would be another vote after all of the research and engineering is completed, so the public can decide whether to go ahead with the project. The public will be voting kind of blind on the bond if the project

- A. Johnson said the select board, if given authority to issue debt by the voters this town meeting day, can then hold an advisory vote down the road once the full studies are done.
- T. Leitz reminded that there is more grant money to apply for, continuing to reduce the potential amount of debt that might be issued. It is also standard to hold a series of community meetings on such projects.

K. Sweeney said the public has been calling for the select board to do something since 2023. This project is what the select board landed on. For all of the unknowns, at least this project gets us closer to doing something.

- M. Bard added that another big flooding event that could impact Randall Meadow can change the picture entirely. This bond will help us plan for reasonable unforeseen, and if conditions change, we might need to look for something else.

After several copy edits recommended, there was no further discussion.

Review updated budget draft

T. Leitz only included the sections that had changes; the areas that have recommended changes are highlighted in yellow.

[see [budget summary](#), [general government](#), and [parks & recreation](#)]

- He worked with feedback from the last meeting to get us to a 2.7% tax rate. He did plug in the \$20,000 for fireworks for NQID, which wasn't included in previous drafts.
- That cost has gone up significantly (from \$14k last year) because the company they use was bought by a big national company and fireworks are subject to tariffs.
- He is estimating a .8% growth in the grand list.
- The special articles don't amount to as much money as expected because organizations didn't put in petitions.

Discussion

T. Taravella confirmed that the main cuts were to recreation.

K. Sweeney asked for more information about the special articles cap.

- T. Leitz clarified that he originally was working with a higher number and the actual requests came in well under the original estimation.

T. Taravella said the American Legion can apply for a grant for the defibrillator ([aed.com](#)) and the decision comes back pretty quickly; that might help defray any request they make of the town.

M. Bard asked how the special articles would be grouped or not.

- T. Leitz said that is entirely up to the board.
- A. Johnson said they can address the Town Meeting warning later in the meeting agenda.

K. Sweeney said he had major concerns about budgeting below CPI, but he will vote the will of the board.

T. Taravella asked what the town is going without in order to achieve this tax rate.

- T. Leitz said not much this year, but the paving plan will need to be addressed next year.

Outline of allowable uses of proposed natural disaster reserve fund

A. Johnson said this outline will be important to provide in the town report for voters to understand the purpose of the reserve fund on the warning and the parameters within which it can be spent.

T. Leitz suggested stating a rule that outstanding funds at the end of the year would be put into the fund. The board discussed various parameters, including type of disaster, whether something is declared a disaster, who or what receives funding (residential, commercial, municipal), priority levels.

- R. Clapp said this fund should be about emergency relief rather than long-term recovery. We also don't know what some of these disasters might look like, so tying our hands to specific uses beyond a disaster emergency could be counter-productive. The level heads of the future select board need to be trusted to disburse the funds appropriately.
- K. Sweeney said the committee is forming a response corps who need to be trained and supported during disaster response, among all of the other needed resources, like equipment and volunteer coordination. When it comes to how this reserve needs to be spent, the immediate response to a disaster is the obvious purpose, but people need to be trained to respond effectively before a disaster happens.
- T. Taravella suggested the funds be used generally for training and deploying those trained and appropriately equipped during a natural disaster.
- R. Clapp said Dani Kehlmann presented two different buckets and this fund is for relief response.

- T. Taravella read from the proposed budget, which specified equipment rental (e.g. pumps), inventory restock, training and education.
- T. Taravella asked who actually will be using the money.
 - A. Johnson said it is intended for the natural disaster response committee to use for effective response during an emergency.
 - R. Clapp said if a federal disaster is declared, a lot of those expenses would be reimbursed, which would be returned to the fund.
- T. Taravella recommended that the policy on acceptable uses clearly states that the funds are for immediate response, not long-term recovery.
- R. Clapp said the training should be done even without a declaration of a disaster, so that declaration should not be a condition of fund use.
- K. Sweeney advised running a draft of the policy by the NDRC.

T. Taravella will take this discussion and draft a use policy for select board review at the next meeting.

Review organizational funding requests and past funding history

Select board discussion addressed:

- The request from the senior center versus the amount allocated to the senior center in the general budget.
 - T. Leitz gave context to the funding, saying that the town has long provided funding, but at the same level every year; the senior center requests additional funding via special article.
- K. Sweeney recommended grouping requests below \$1000.
 - R. Clapp and M. Bard said they should include requests at \$1,000 as well; anything above \$1,000 will be a separate article.

Motion by T. Taravella to group the special article funding requests so that requests at \$1,000 and below are grouped together, and \$1,001 dollars or more and new requests are grouped individually; seconded by K. Sweeney.

No further discussion; **motion passed 3-1 with one abstention (M. Bard)**

Review draft Town Meeting warning

The select board discussed the order in which to present the special articles for funding requests by organizations.

Motion by R. Clapp to list first the grouped requests of \$1,000 and under, and then go in descending order from largest request to smallest; seconded by M. Bard.

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

The select board discussed the challenges of having two articles, not consecutively, about the general budget and capital expenses because they depend on each other.

- T. Leitz said the recommended best practice is that capital items should be approved separately, but people should know that modifying one of the articles means making modifications to an article that has already been voted on.
- Select board members will consult with Town Moderator Rebecca Ellis about her training on this topic.

- T. Leitz will draft language for an article that combines general expenses and capital expenses for select board consideration.

Discussion

S. Sabin pointed out that the housing trust fund hasn't been listed as an article for a reserve fund.

- T. Taravella said we should mirror the language used for the article establishing a natural disaster reserve fund.
- It was noted that the housing task force already established allowable uses approved by the select board.
 - T. Leitz noted that an article establishing a reserve fund should indicate the intended or approved uses. He will confirm with counsel.
- A. Imhoff stated her agreement with S. Sabin about creating a reserve fund as a separate entity.
- C. Viens stated his perspective that the current setup of the housing trust fund is most appropriate because it is too early to determine if a permanent fund is warranted.

Motion by R. Clapp that the select board does not create a housing reserve fund at this time; seconded by K. Sweeney.

Additional discussion

K. Sweeney reiterated that no money in the housing trust fund has yet been spent, and there is still a lot of discussion around the specific initiatives for which the money will be useful.

- The allowable uses approved by the select board are general enough to allow the needed flexibility.
- K. Sweeney noted Joe Camaratta's advice, research, and guidance will remain crucial to developing any policy going forward.

No further discussion; **motion failed, 2-3.**

Review and consider adoption of updated special event permit

T. Taravella updated the permit to clearly point applicants to the State Department of Liquor Control portal for alcohol permits.

A. Johnson wondered if the threshold of 100 people when alcohol is being served is too low.

- The select board agreed to increase the number to 200.
- T. Taravella will also remove specific names and replace them with roles.

R. Clapp asked whether events that don't entail serving alcohol or closing roads, but have 100 people or more, would require a permit.

The select board acknowledged that the ordinance, written in 1993, needs to be reviewed before a new permit application can be adopted.

Municipal manager and board member updates

R. Clapp:

- Waterbury Winterfest starts next week, Jan. 28, running through Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026.

T. Taravella plugged the Conservation Commission calendar, available for \$10 at the town offices.

A Johnson:

- Joe Camaratta provided Housing Task Force goals and aspirations for the town report, as well as some data pertaining to housing in Waterbury
- Someone from Stowe Land Trust has asked to speak to the select board at an upcoming meeting

T. Leitz:

- The FEMA buyout properties have gone nowhere, but some updated paperwork has been requested. That is a good sign that the
- The stormwater master plan process kicked off today.
- Another round of CDBG-Disaster Recovery grants is coming up, and one conversation he is having with the state is about a contingency plan if the FEMA buyouts don't happen.
- The Better Connections project is applying for some small grants for additional funding for things like line striping.

M. Staskus added an update on the town plan process and the upcoming planning commission schedule for continuing to review chapter aspirations, goals, and strategies.

Next meeting agenda

Special event permit and ordinance

Finalize warning for Town Meeting

Policies for housing reserve fund and natural disaster reserve fund

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by K. Sweeney to find that premature public knowledge of contracts 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 executive session and invite the town manager; seconded by T. Taravella.

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

Select board entered executive session at 8:41 p.m.

Select board exited executive session at 9:00 p.m. with no action taken.

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

Motion approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT, 9:00 p.m.

Next meeting of the Waterbury Select Board: **Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.**