

SELECTBOARD MEETING
June 12, 2025
Minutes

Present:	Pat Haller Nick Nichols Julia Andrews Casey Mathieu	Greg Barrows Holly Delisle Callie Hamdy Sean Cushing
----------	--	---

Guests: see page 5.

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Added Beaver Conflicts to Highway Department, Chittenden County Selectboard Update to Communication.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

P. Haller motioned to approve the May 22, 2025 minutes as amended. **C. Mathieu** Seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Representative, was not present. **H. Delisle** received communication from CCRPC. They approved Westford's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) submission. That study will take place over the summer. The draft Regional Land Use map was reviewed. CCRPC summarized the engagement they conducted surrounding Act 181 changes and would put out a webinar with their findings.

ROAD SCHEDULE

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, reviewed the Road Schedule for May 23, 2025 to June 12, 2025.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASE REQUEST

C. Mathieu recused himself due to a conflict of interest and left the building. Four quotes for a Harley rake were presented: John Deer, Pete's, Milton CAT, and CCR Sales and Service. **P. Haller** asked about maintenance and dealer support. **S. Cushing** had experience with John Deer and Milton CAT, but not with Pete's or CCR. **J. Andrews** moved that if a skid steer was purchased then a Harley rake would be purchased from CCR. **P. Haller** seconded. **N. Nichols** clarified that the Selectboard was aware of Casey's conflict of interest and that they had removed any possible influence. **H. Delisle** noted that the ethics liaison had spent time making sure that they handled this conflict of interest appropriately. A board member can participate in a transaction if they don't benefit any more than any other person who may be bidding. Bids must be reviewed in an open bidding process. Motion passed 3-0.

C. Mathieu returned to the meeting.

FY'25 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

G. Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'25 Budget Status Report. **P. Haller** asked Greg whether the Town had the financial ability to purchase the skid steer Sean previously proposed and the Harley rake the Board just selected. **G. Barrows** noted that there were

sufficient funds if all remaining expenses fell within the expected range for the remainder of FY'25. **P. Haller** motioned to use funds that will not be spent by June 30th to purchase the skid steer for \$99,900 and Harley rake for \$9,945. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

BEAVER CONFLICTS

The Selectboard received correspondence from a resident that suggested Beaver Deceivers as an alternate way to deal with beavers building in road culverts. **S. Cushing** noted only one or two issues with beavers this year. He was not sure that Beaver Deceivers would be possible or effective in the areas where there had been issues. **P. Haller** noted the anti-beaver infrastructure on Woods Hollow Road. Those were preventative infrastructure, but the beavers had not stopped building, just built further up the waterway.

C. Winfield felt that killing beavers was not proven to be effective long term. She believed using humane infrastructure, such as the Beaver Deceivers, would allow the beavers to maintain crucial wetland habitat, and acknowledged that infrastructure didn't prevent flooding. Carol noted that grants were available for installation. She hoped that the board would consider a policy for non-lethal beaver control. The estimated cost for each Beaver Deceiver is \$4,000. **P. Haller** asked Carol if there was an ideal culvert size. **C. Winfield** was not sure.

Barb Peck would not have a problem if the beavers were killed quickly and humanely. She believed some traps took twenty minutes to kill the animal and she felt that was inhumane. **Kim Guidry** asked if we could hire out the trapping of the beavers. **C. Mathieu** said the Town had a partnership with a trapper. **S. Cushing** said it was \$150 to set up and \$75 for every beaver trapped, costing around \$300 per instance. **K. Guidry** asked if there was a downside to trapping vs the Beaver Deceiver? The beavers are trapped and killed because they cannot be relocated vs the Beaver Deceiver which encourages the beavers to build somewhere else. **H. Delisle** asked if the beavers came back to an area after trapping. Sean noted that some areas were recurring, but most were every few years or so. **P. Haller** wondered if beavers had more run-ins with cars where Beaver Deceivers were installed.

Kirsten Tyler mentioned that the Conservation Commission could research grants for a beaver deceiver. She felt that beavers were an important ecological creature for wetlands. **J. Andrews** suggested identifying a spot such as Cambridge Road or Old # 11 as a test area. **N. Nichols** wondered if it was worth talking to the organization Carol mentioned that could provide grant funds. The board agreed, but thought more information was the next step.

1705 UPDATE

P. Haller was waiting for more information from the Preservation Trust of Vermont. **H. Delisle** checked in with Krebs & Lansing about the status of the wetlands delineations and existing conditions survey. **P. Haller** felt that fall was a good time to begin public outreach and would allow them to get the information needed prior. **J. Andrews** thought the Board needed the information the engineers before beginning outreach. **N. Nichols** liked thinking of things in phases. The board will reconvene on this subject once they get more information.

REQUEST TO USE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS

Representative **Rey Garofano** shared that she, Representative Dodge, community members and the Essex Westford School District (EWSD) were planning a dinner and panel discussion to educate students, families and the community about substance use prevention, warning signs, destigmatization recovery and harm reduction. They plan to use Opioid Settlement funds to cover expenses. Rey asked if Westford could contribute funds and/or collaboration for

the event. Both Essex and Essex Junction had offered funds and volunteers. They did not have an exact amount to ask for yet but hoped all three EWSD communities would participate.

N. Nichols thanked Representative Garofano. He knew Westford families who had lost a member to overdose. He wanted to honor their losses by allowing them to assist in the direction of the funds and/or give input. **R. Garofano** had already met with a Westford family with lived experience. The organizers hoped families would share their experiences on the panel and offered to connect with anyone who wanted to be involved. Rey felt that there had not been enough transparency about how settlement funds had been used. **N. Nichols** suggested promoting the event within Westford. **R. Garofano** explained they would accept any contribution the town was comfortable giving. She acknowledged that Westford gets the least amount of settlement dollars out of the three towns. **J. Andrews** shared that the Common Hall was thinking about activities they could do to support youth and maintain the small community feel. **J. Andrews** proposed giving \$1,000 to the effort. **R. Garofano** suggested the town commit just to partnering vs setting a specific dollar amount. **P. Haller** agreed that up to \$1,000 was worth the opportunity. **J. Andrews** motioned that Westford partner with the group putting together the Opioid Forum at a financial level to be determined. **N. Nichols** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

REQUEST TO USE SCHOOL TRAILS IN OCTOBER

Catie Markesich requested permission to use the school trails for a 5k and 10k race on Saturday October 25th to celebrate Dia de los Muertos. She had previously organized the same 5k in 2022. **C. Markesich** described the race route and decorations. She would also check in with the Conservation Commission prior to proceeding. **K. Tyler** noted they should check trails for wetness before the race. **N. Nichols** motioned to allow Catie Markesich to use the Misty Meadows Town Trails on October 25th. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE REQUEST

The Conservation Commission (WCC) requested permission to mow/weed-wack Seymour Trail after receiving notes from residents about its condition. Westford's trail maintenance document is still in process. In the meantime, the WCC would like direction. **P. Haller** explained that the previous Selectboard did not indicate a desire to stop doing maintenance, but the WCC had stopped for the winter. He understood that the WCC wanted to proceed carefully prior to the document being finalized, however the intention was always to work with the landowners in the interim. He thought the WCC should continue trying to do maintenance in communication with the landowners while they work on the document. **K. Tyler** shared that the person that noted the lack of maintenance had volunteered to assist with maintenance. There are four or five landowners abutting Seymour trail. She requested guidance on who to contact and what should the nature of that contact be. What if they say no? She wanted to keep the trails safe for those who want to use them. **P. Haller** asked if there had been conflicts with residents along Seymour Trail. Kirsten said no. Pat thought the WCC should communicate that maintenance was going to happen. **K. Tyler** asked if she should contact the landowners directly or if a public statement should be made. The Board recommended the WCC make direct contact with the landowners. **H. Delisle** noted a list of contact information for landowners abutting legal trails. **Jim Anderson** asked where this left them regarding the trail maintenance document. **P. Haller** explained that Wendy Doane would still be helming that process for collaboration with the WCC. Then the liaisons would come together with the landowners. The Andersons had volunteered to maintain the portion of trail that goes through their property and that kind of collaboration was seen as positive by the town.

E911 CONSIDERATIONS FOR GOODRICH TRAIL

There are currently two residences with accesses off the Goodrich Trail, and another proposed. Those properties use Machia Hill Road addresses. E911, the state program that streamlined emergency dispatch, alerted the Town that these addresses were out of compliance with e911 standards. They approved two options: 1.) keep the name Goodrich Trail for the whole length and ask homeowners to change their addresses or 2.) rename the entire length of the trail to Machia Hill Road. There was a third, non-e911-approved option to change the e911 name for only a portion of the legal trail beginning at the intersection with Machia Hill Road and ending after the last proposed lot on Goodrich Trail. This would not comply with e911 standards and was not recommended because future subdivisions would require doing this process again.

H. Delisle thought that if the entire trail was renamed to Machia Hill Road, people were going to think it was drivable. **P. Haller's** first instinct was to name it Machia Hill Road until it was no longer drivable, then as subdivisions happened the road name Machia Hill Road would get extended. The third option seemed like the most logical to him. Holly agreed that option 3 would keep as many people happy as possible, but it was not recommended. **K. Tyler** thought it would cause confusion if either e911-approved option was selected. **P. Haller** motioned to change the e911 name to Machia Hill Road up to the subdivision of the Girrs and for it to continue to be Goodrich Trail from that point on. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

COMMON COMMITTEE REQUEST TO USE FUNDS

The Common Committee (CC) wanted to replace the split rail fence on the Common. They got quotes from 2 vendors. The CC met and chose a vendor and quote. The CC needed permission from the Selectboard to make purchases of over \$500. The proposal would allow the rails to be locked in place.

J. Andrews asked how much money the CC had. **G. Barrows** said the CC recently redeemed one of their CDs and they had about \$4,400. They had other certificates as well. Looking at the quotes, **P. Haller** noticed that the quote was for more linear feet than what currently existed. Previously there had been discussion about people driving on to the Common. He wondered if the extra length was a mitigation effort to prevent driving on the Common. **J. Andrews** moved to support the Common Committee's expenditure of \$3,070.36 to replace the split rail fence. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

REVIEW DRAFT RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR VICIOUS DOG HEARINGS

The draft clarified the order of operations for deliberation and final order. **P. Haller** motioned to adopt the rules of procedure as presented. **N. Nichols** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

REVIEW FY'25 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

G. Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'25 General Fund Budget Status Report.

H. Delisle suggested establishing a 1705 reserve fund for potential grant match dollars.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

G. Barrows went through the annual questionnaire's questions and answers.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS

G. Barrows, Treasurer, went over the Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants.

CORRESPONDENCE

Received Lucas' thesis, Wendy Doane discussion on wastewater.

P. Haller noted that recommendations from the public regarding minutes were being directed at minute takers themselves. He believed that boards should take and appreciate suggestions, but that they should be addressed to the board or to the committee that approves the minutes in question. He did not want the minute takers to be responsible for considering changes or responding to public suggestions before the respective board had a chance to review the minutes. He believed the body should be responsible for this, and **J. Andrews** agreed with that. Pat would like the public to give their comments directly to the respective board. The Board agreed with Pat's suggestion.

B. Peck explained her concerns with the Planning Commission (PC) in particular. In the past three years she has felt she was misquoted or that the crux of what she said was incorrect. She felt that this came to a head at the last PC meeting when they asked her if she felt they were doing a better job with giving the public the opportunity to speak. She believed that recently they had, but she had not felt that in the past. She was not blaming the minute takers. She would rather not be quoted at all than be quoted incorrectly.

They also received correspondence from Emma at CCRPC about Act 181 engagement.

COMMUNICATION

There was no communication.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

C. Mathieu moved to find that premature public knowledge of matters relating to personnel would place the Town at a significant disadvantage. Pat seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Casey moved to enter executive session at 9:00pm and invited **H Delisle** and **G Barrows** to attend. Pat seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Casey Mathieu
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Dick Lavallee
Dave Lavallee
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen

Barb Peck
Pat Hechmer
Kirsten Tyler
Carol Winfield
Max Tyler

Catie Markesich
Kati Anderson
Jim Anderson
Rey Garofano
Peter Girr

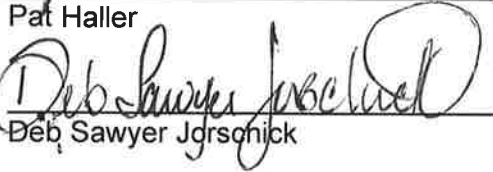
ADOPTED THIS 26 TH DAY OF JUNE 2025.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD

Casey Mathieu, Chair



Pat Haller



Deb Sawyer Jorsnick



Julia Andrews



William "Nick" Nichols