

SELECTBOARD MEETING

June 26, 2025

Minutes

Present:	Pat Haller	Greg Barrows
	Nick Nichols	Holly Delisle
	Julia Andrews	Callie Hamdy
	Deb Jorschick	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 discussion with the Essex Westford School District, added question to the chair of the Common Committee regarding fencing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ben Bornstein added his thoughts to the Goodrich Trail discussion from the last Selectboard meeting as he was not present. He supported the Board's decision regarding the e911 road name. He reiterated the three court orders that give him and his heirs access to their land off Machia Hill Road. Ben noted some logs across the trail that he had asked to be removed. **P. Haller** asked if he had asked the Conservation Commission about this. Ben had.

Lori Johnson thanked the Selectboard for approving the Common Committee request last meeting. She also thanked the Selectboard for providing the Selectboard packet to the public. She requested that older packets remain available on the website. **H. Delisle** was trying to limit the number of files kept on the website, which is why she had been replacing it each time. **J. Andrews** suggested limiting how long packets are left up to save server space. **P. Haller** thought more information was better but did not have a specific limit in mind. The Selectboard agreed to keep them online as an archive and suggested revisiting storage limits in the future.

Dave Gauthier noted that the physical version of the newsletter was sometimes mailed later than the 1st of the month. **C. Hamdy**, Town Clerk, puts together the newsletter. She always intends to mail it prior to the 1st, but it is not always possible. The digital version is always on the website before the 1st.

MINUTES

P. Haller motioned to approve the June 12, 2025 minutes as amended. **J. Andrews** Seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

FENCING ON TOWN COMMON

At the last Selectboard meeting the Common Committee was approved to use funds for a new split rail fence. **P. Haller** wondered if more fencing was quoted than what is there now. **L. Johnson** explained that the fence had originally been 100 feet, but the ends had deteriorated and are no longer present. They will extend it slightly to prevent access from Cambridge Road.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) representative, shared that the draft future land use map had been updated with feedback from all over the county, all of which was posted online. He urged everyone to review it

ROAD SCHEDULE

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, went over the Road Schedule from June 13, 2025 to June 26, 2025.

Carol Winfield met with Sean regarding installing a Beaver Deceiver on Old #11 Road. **P. Haller** asked if there was a beaver in that area presently. Sean said no. The Westford Conservation Commission (WCC) offered to help write a grant. **H. Delisle** suggested Carol and the WCC collaborate if Sean felt comfortable proceeding. **P. Haller** motioned to authorize the WCC and Carol Winfield to work on the grant application once we know the cost for the Beaver Deceiver. **J. Andrews** seconded. **N. Nichols** asked if the grant covered 100% of the costs. **C. Winfield** explained it was a non-profit group that usually prefers matching funds. Motion passed 4-0.

FY'25 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

G. Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'25 Highway Budget Status Report. The total cost of the skid steer and Harley rake was approximately \$110,000. The Highway Department has enough funds to make the purchases in cash as proposed at the last Selectboard meeting.

DISCUSSION WITH ESSEX WESTFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT (EWSD)

EWSD had requested a meeting with only the Selectboard Chair and Vice Chair, not the whole Selectboard. **P. Haller** and **C. Mathieu** met with the EWSD School Board Chair. EWSD wanted to brainstorm, but did not want to decide long term plans.

EWSD suggested having a forest school program because of the natural setting which was unique to the Westford community. Richmond has something similar; it could be a magnet for students from inside and outside the district. Pat thought that idea sounded in line with the community. Prior to merging with EWSD, one of the primary visions for the school was to take advantage of its natural setting. EWSD also suggested adding full-day childcare for students that would attend EWSD. EWSD asked for contacts that the new superintendent could reach out to. They offered the Selectboard, Westford PTO, and Lori Miller of the Westford Rec Committee. Lori is also involved with the Essex Tech Center which may tie in with the forest school concept. **P. Haller** suggested his family since they were neighbors and wanted to help the school remain. Also noted was Marcie Lewis and the WCC. They had no further communication with EWSD after that meeting.

Andre Roy, one of Westford's two representatives to the School Board, noted that Bill H.454 had not yet passed at the time of Pat and Casey's meeting. He encouraged everybody to read the bill and contact their representatives with concerns and questions. In January they will begin talking about the new districts. According to Andre, EWSD is not in compliance with the new district minimums indicated in the bill.

C. Winfield asked how a new program, like a forest school, would be funded. One of the main motivations for consolidation of Westford's middle school students was cost. She felt it was counterintuitive to not keep middle school students in Westford but try to start a new program.

P. Haller said that it had not been thoroughly discussed, but EWSD had thought the forest school would be tuition-based.

1705 UPDATE

Preservation Trust Update

P. Haller emailed Jenna at the Preservation Trust who responded to say that a letter would be sent Friday.

Planning Commission Liaison Appointment for 1705 Project

The Planning Commission appointed Mo Reilly and Max Tyler as Planning Commission Liaisons for 1705. **N. Nichols** thanked them for their willingness to work with the board. The board and **Mo Reilly** discussed the best way to communicate and best practices.

CONSIDER FUTURE OF TOWN OFFICE BUILDING

H. Delisle said that this topic had been discussed for years, and it was timely now because she and **H. Cism** met with Taylor from CCRPC. He questioned what the Selectboard's plans were for the Town Office. When told the town did not know yet, Taylor indicated that it would be difficult to make plans for 1705 since a Town Office could take up significant space. He recommended the Selectboard decide if a new Town Office is a priority as part of 1705 or otherwise, especially before doing public outreach. If the Selectboard determined that a new building was necessary, Taylor suggested asking Weimann Lamphere (WLA) to do an alternatives analysis for all the town-owned properties to see which site makes the most sense. Taylor also suggested engaging the SE Group for the site plan. They did the site plan for 1705 in 2019 and already had information on the property.

P. Haller noted that previous boards had considered making adjustments to the existing Town Office building, but that became cost prohibitive due to the need for elevators. He recalled that expansion into the Town Office parking lot was not possible because of the existing septic system and wetlands. He agreed that the Board needed to decide what space was needed and whether to expand or build something new. **H. Delisle** asked if the Board would want to reserve space on 1705 for a potential new building. The engineers were still working on the wetland delineation and existing conditions survey. **H. Delisle** recalled the Board asking WLA to provide a single level building design for 1705 planning. That process was one reason for doing a wetland delineation.

P. Haller recalled that one reason for purchasing 1705 was space for the Town Office expansion or new building. **J. Andrews** felt it was clear that more space was needed. What WLA proposed could be a \$4 million project. She wanted to give people the space they need for less money, perhaps adding on to the current building if conditions allowed. **N. Nichols** wondered what space was needed. **C. Hamdy**, Town Clerk, noted that more vault space was necessary as the vaults will be totally full by some point in 2026. The records stored in the vault must be kept accessible to the public in a fireproof location forever per state statute. Reorganization could increase space for perhaps an additional year but would not be a long-term solution. **H. Delisle** noted that the estimated septic capacity for the system proposed by Krebs & Lansing would support the library and the new building proposed by WLA.

L. Johnson thought any cost presented earlier would have increased. She wondered if some things stored in the basement could be kept elsewhere to free up space. She also suggested the town staff conduct an inventory of the items stored in the vaults to see if there are things that don't need to be there. **Barb Peck** was on the Historical Society board when the town bought the Spiller property in 2012-2013 which was supposed to be the site for the new town office. She was also the committee that looked at the septic system there. She recalled that the Town could not tear down the building without building something new very quickly to grandfather the septic system. She recalled that the Jackson property became available and the Selectboard changed their focus to that. She preferred to renovate because a new building was too expensive. **Sheila Franz** recalled that the Town could buy the school building back for \$1 if it wasn't a school anymore. She suggested getting some space in the school.

Mo Reilly would like to walk the property and see where the wetland delineation is and where the septic system would be. She suggested spray painting things so people can visualize, because that would be easier for the public. She viewed the properties as a campus; the Library, Town Office, and 1705. She believed public engagement would be important and hard. **P. Haller** believed the Town Office and library must have a septic system. Even if we moved to a different property, we would need a wastewater system on 1705 to be able to sell the existing buildings.

CONSIDER PLANNING CONSULTANT CONTRACT

Ron Rodjenski's contract ends on July 1st. **H. Delisle** and **Harmony Cism** met with CCRPC regarding the possibility of sharing a Town Planner, but CCRPC felt that was unlikely. Harmony was comfortable with not pursuing a Town Planner for now. Holly will continue investigating a partnership. With 1705 coming up for public engagement, Harmony may apply for a municipal planning grant. She could work with Ron on it as well as project management. Ron provided a draft contract to continue his services. **D. Jorschick** motioned to sign the contract with Stone Shore Consulting. **N. Nichols** Seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

REVIEW DRAFT POLICY: POSTMARKED TAX PAYMENTS POLICY

The Town Office received a tax payment after the due date that had two conflicting date stamps from the post office causing confusion. After research, it was determined that both marks were postmarks, and the earlier dated mark was acceptable. The policy describes what postmarks are, gives visual examples, and gives a solution for when conflicts occur.

N. Nichols felt it was easy to get lost in the details and suggested communicating the key points in a way that was easy to understand. **H. Delisle** agreed. She will add it to the website under the treasurer and FAQ pages. **N. Nichols** motioned to adopt the postmark tax return policy as amended. **P. Haller** 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.

REVIEW YEAR END RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS

D. Jorschick motioned to approve the year-end reserve fund transfers. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Dave Lavallee asked if he could weed/thin around the gardens at 1705 prior to 4th of July. He had been given permission and completed the work. The board complimented the work and thanked him. **C. Winfield** asked if the public could use 1705 for parking for 4th of July. **P. Haller** did not want to officially authorize it as there were still petroleum stains on the property although he acknowledged this does not prevent people from parking there.

Additional correspondence: **Seth Jensen** sent an email related to the town office discussion, correspondence between **J. Andrews** and **P. Haller** regarding EWSD, and a message from **Michael Hechmer** regarding Maple Tree Lane/Woods Hollow Road traffic concerns. **J. Andrews** asked Holly to see if a CCRPC study was available for that area. **H. Delisle** reached out to CCRPC. The board discussed the site line issues, and potential stop sign locations. It would be added to the future agenda. **H. Delisle** was pursuing a public safety grant from the

sheriff's department for fixed solar radar signs. They are relatively expensive, and the traffic study had recommended two of them. We will not know until October if we will receive the grant.

COMMUNICATION

There was no communication.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

P. Haller moved to find that premature public knowledge of matters relating to personnel would place the Town at a significant disadvantage. **N. Nichols** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

At 8:28 p.m., **P. Haller** moved to enter executive session for matters of personnel and invited Holly Delisle to attend. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

At 8:56 p.m., **D. Jorschick** moved to exit executive session. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0. No action was taken

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Haller
Selectboard Vice Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST


Dave Gauthier
Ben Bornstein
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Lori Johnson
Dave Lavallee

Lynn Gauthier
Becky Roy
Carol Winfield
Barb Peck
Sheila Franz
Mo Reilly

Andre Roy

ADOPTED THIS 10 TH DAY OF July 2025.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD




Casey Mathieu, Chair



Pat Haller



Deb Sawyer Jorschick



Julia Andrews



William "Nick" Nichols