

**SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**July 24, 2025**  
**Minutes**

Present:	Pat Haller Julia Andrews Deb Jorschick Nick Nichols	Greg Barrows Holly Delisle Callie Hamdy Sean Cushing
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Guests: See page 7.

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

**CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**RECEPTION IN RECOGNITION OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S SERVICE**

A brief reception was held for **Holly Delisle**, Town Administrator, as her last day with the town is tomorrow.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**MINUTES**

**J. Andrews** motioned to approve the July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, minutes as amended. **N. Nichols** Seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**CCRPC UPDATE**

**Ben Bornstein**, CCRPC Representative, was present. There were funds left over from the mini grant from the energy resiliency work on the town garage. Those funds can be allocated elsewhere.

**ROAD SCHEDULE**

**S. Cushing**, Road Foreman, was present and went over the Road Schedule from July 11, 2025, to July 24, 2025.

**REVIEW PAVING GRANT AWARD**

Every year we apply for paving grant funds from the state for highway structures. How much award we get depends on how many other towns request funding and where we are in the order. If you received a grant recently you are at the end of the list. We have reached the point where we are close enough to the top of the list to be awarded a \$200,000 grant. We intend to use the funds for the paving of Westford Milton Road, however underfunding for the past several years has left us without enough. There had been additional money budgeted this year to accommodate that underbudgeting. The grant would need to be used by 2027; this would move up the project. Hutchins estimated it at about \$419,000 for the project, but **H. Delisle** also assumes prices will go up since that quote was given; She predicted around \$450,000. If

they do not accept the grant this year it does not diminish our chances for future grants, but there is no guarantee next year we will get \$200,000.

**J. Andrews** asked if looking down the road, understanding that the Highway Reserve Fund will be depleted, are there other things on the horizon we need to be considering? **H. Delisle** explained that everything we currently own is considered; but if we were to purchase anything new that might affect things. **P. Haller** asked Sean what his assessment of doing the paving now vs later is? **S. Cushing** noted that a lot of the patching currently done on the road is late winter/springtime, there is still patching being done on Westford Milton Road. It will hold, but it will get progressively worse each year it's pushed out. The unevenness of the road also contributes to a lesser quality plow in the wintertime. The board needs to decide on the grant by tomorrow. **G. Barrows**, Treasurer, was comfortable with it, because it will cost us regardless, but we might not get this much from the state for a grant if it is pushed off.

**N. Nichols** motioned to accept the \$200,000 for paving Westford Milton Rd. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**P. Haller** motioned to authorize Holly to sign the documentation for the Grant. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

#### **BEAVER DECEIVER UPDATE**

The town had been working to investigate the installation of a beaver deceiver on the Schutlz Pond to avoid trapping and killing a beaver that may otherwise block the culvert. Protect Our Wildlife suggests they could partially fund the full cost of the \$4,500 beaver deceiver, \$4,000 with \$500 needed from the town.

**Randy Barrows**, director of the Vermont Trappers Association, was present. He has nothing against beavers and thinks they are amazing animals, but in his 40 years of trapping experience, he feels the only good method of taking care of a situation where beavers might block a culvert is to trap them. He brought pictures of deceivers that had gone unmaintained and caused damage. He understands we already work with a nuisance trapper that already takes care of beavers in town, he thinks they are a very reasonable price compared to a deceiver. When the deceivers work, they work very well, but they need to be cleaned/cleared at least once a year. **P. Haller** asked if Randy's seen success with well-maintained deceivers; He had. The way they are designed is a fencing that allows the water to flow through, but water that moves, flushes debris down which builds up and creates a dam of its own, creating further problems upstream. **R. Barrows** noted that it is not a simple task to clean them out, it can be 4-5 feet of water and might require scuba gear. **H. Delisle** asked if Randy could tell them what removal looks like when beavers are trapped. **R. Barrows** described the traps he uses for beavers, when the beaver comes through it is designed to catch them and kill instantly.

**Carol Winfield** was present. She agreed that the deceivers need to be maintained every year, much like a culvert needs to get cleaned out. Debris happens even in culverts without them, and she noted that in some areas they have been installed for 10 years with routine maintenance. She listed several towns that had a significant number of deceivers. To her the proof of them working well is that the towns that have them continue to put in more. The Westford Conservation Commission (WCC) had also endorsed the project. She believed it to

be a very small risk financially for the town. She lauded the environmental benefits of maintaining beaver ponds and wetlands as a reason to choose deceivers over trapping.

**Kim Guidry** was present. She was grateful for the offer of the grant from Protect Our Wildlife; She is hearing about other towns needing subsequent deceivers. Would the town need to fund any future deceivers? How many beavers could we expect in a 12-month period? **R. Barrows** noted that in a 1-year period two adults can have around four kits, so you end up with six beavers. If you go out for 10 years without keeping them in check, you will have around 618 beavers. **J. Andrews** asked why we do not see that many beavers now. **R. Barrows** responded that it is because of the number of trappers. **C. Winfield** disagreed with Randy's numbers because many kits die during their first year and adults do not breed every year. She cited the effectiveness of the beaver baffle that has been on Woods Hollow Road for some time.

**D. Jorschick** asked Sean what the likelihood of the maintenance is he will have to do on something like this given his schedule and the number of road crew employees. **S. Cushing** noted that they will have to set aside time each year to take care of it. His other thought on this is that the deceiver is going to be on the inlet side of the culvert, but it is the outlet side of the culvert that is the issue. Right now, we do not have water backed up in the inlet, but it will back up with the deceiver. Yes, the deceiver stops beavers building in the culvert but does not stop them building so you will have another pond like they have on Woods Hollow Road where there are multiple dams up the river.

**H. Delisle** noted that the agreement for the deceivers' states that beavers cannot be killed at that site for 10 years. She would want more clarity on that. **J. Andrews** thinks the statement is too broad, she is not against the deceiver but is uncomfortable signing because the agreement is so broad and feels it puts us at risk. **D. Jorschick** did not feel comfortable without speaking with an expert on the deceivers. **P. Haller** thinks we should ask somebody from Monkton, such as the Road Foreman, who has seen those installed. He agrees it is very broad, if we did want to install a deceiver, he would want to change the wording of the agreement. **N. Nichols** wanted to talk about different options for maintenance, does it have to be the road crew, or can it be volunteer based?

#### **FY'25 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT**

**G. Barrows**, Treasurer, was present and went over the FY'25 Budget Status Report.

#### **WESTFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADVOCACY GROUP PRESENTATION**

**Kirsten Tyler**, **Meghan Orisko**, and **Alyssa Koop** were present. They presented information about ACT 73 and potential opportunities that Westford may have. With the new law, the existing districts including EWSD will be dissolved. There is currently a task force for creating new districts and regional school boards, removing potential town representation. This means that we will be in a new district with new towns. We will probably be grouped with Essex, Essex Junction, Colchester, and Milton. If we do not request where we are placed, we will not be given a choice. In this scenario with the larger towns, Westford would be the smallest town and school in the district. With the region-based representation we would have even less influence than we do now. They would like the board to request Westford be placed in a more aligned rural district with towns that are more like Westford. They submitted a list of towns that

about Westford we could think about. The reason for this is that they would be more rural and smaller.

Right now, in EWSD, there is a current narrative that Essex subsidizes Westford, which is untrue. Westford pays over \$4 million annually to EWSD and the cost to operate the Westford School is around \$3.8 million. Also, we have a lack of representation, having two half votes on the school board while Essex and Essex Junction hold ten full votes. This limits us on decisions that affect us. We asked about more representation on the board, and it was a resounding no with the school board saying in the articles of agreement representation was based on population. In the articles of agreement there are no protections towards the closing of Westford School. Other districts have more protection. The school board does not want to update EWSD's articles of agreement. The framing of Westford as a declining school does not represent the data. The town has limited time to act before the redistricting master list is finalized in December. They are requesting the Selectboard help the community discuss this in a town forum and decide if we want to be grouped with other rural towns or be grouped with Essex, to decide to join the Rural School Community Alliance (RSCA) or not and reach out to other towns to inquire about joining with them. Once a decision is made, they are requesting the town draft a letter to the redistricting task force.

**Margaret** from the Rural School Alliance (RSA) was present. She gave a summary of the alliance. They represent one hundred towns. In about ten, the school board situation is similar to ours where they are dominated by a much larger town. In those instances, the Selectboard chooses to join vs the individual school. As an alliance they work through the legislative process and were asked to nominate appointees to the task force. Two of their nominees are on the redistricting task force. They will begin meeting in August and finalize the districts by December, each between four and eight thousand students. In our case our voice is so diminished, choices about our school will be made by other towns and not us, especially school closure and they are looking to change the education system and save money; So it does potentially put us on the chopping block even if our current district says otherwise. They think in a situation like ours we might be better off working with Mt. Mansfield, Jericho, and Underhill, who are more similar demographically to Westford than Essex is. Even if we partnered outside of Essex we will be part of a large group, but we have a chance to not be the only small town/small school within that district and may be able to have a more understanding relationship with others in our district because of that.

**P. Haller** likes the idea of having a forum with the town residents. He has some reservations; we elected school board members but would appoint a member of the community to be the voice of the school children in this issue. **J. Andrews** thinks the challenge is that our school board members cannot represent both the school board and the RSA since those entities are at odds. Her understanding is that the board members are often asked to be part of a united front. It seems clear to her they would have to tread lightly in this issue. **K. Tyler** did ask the school board if they would join the RSA, they did not say no but they never joined. A Selectboard member can be the representative of the alliance, but they are busier, that is why the RSA suggests a dedicated community member.

**Rebecca Davanon** was present. If the town holds a forum and determines that they would like to stay part of a larger district as we are currently does the alliance help us still advocate within

that larger group? **Margaret** stated that in ACT 73 that existing districts will stay together unless any requests or information come to the task force to suggest something different. They would represent the town through the redistricting process, but not after. They are a grass roots volunteer organization. **R. Davanon** commented that as a mother of a toddler and current Westford School child, she does not want Westford to be asleep at the wheel. She wants us to coalesce as a town and get everybody involved. She does not know if the consensus is for a larger town district or to be with rural towns. Until we get that answer we cannot decide. She urged the board to move as fast as they can.

**P. Haller** read the bullet point summary of the next potential steps. The board was in favor of doing a public hearing. **D. Jorschick** asked what the responsibility of the board doing this would be. **J. Andrews** thinks in this case the board is to represent the community and help them come together to decide. She also thought that the current parent group should not represent the RSA and thought they should find a more neutral party as not everybody was against the Westford middle schoolers going to Essex Middle School. **P. Haller** thought the first step was holding a forum. **N. Nichols** thinks one potential decision is to have Westford formally request not to be grouped with Essex. Because of this the board must advertise the intention of the forum very specifically.

**K. Tyler** stated that to withdraw from a school district there is a state statute that we must get 5% petition of the member towns in the district. They have many signatures because of those anti middle school consolidation petitions. They also have a petition for the withdrawal from EWSD and have 206 signatures, which is a lot more than 5%. There is already a number of people that are interested in withdrawing from the district. **J. Andrews** understood this and noted that as the board they have a responsibility to make sure every voice is heard, this is why the forum was the first step. **Sarah Roberts** was present. To her the most important part of the forum is to make sure everybody understands exactly what is going to happen. She thinks a lot of people do not understand and the forum would allow people to become educated so they can decide.

#### **CZAPSKI ROAD MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT REVIEW**

Czapski's built a property off Rogers Road off the Class 4 Section. The board approved that section up to their access. They recently signed a roadway agreement that included an insured deposit; It was intended to be extended, but that did not come to fruition, and they do not intend to improve it beyond where it is now. This agreement amends the previous agreement and allows for return of the remaining surety.

**N. Nichols** motioned to approve. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

#### **CHANGES TO COMMON FENCE REPLACEMENT REQUEST**

**Lori Johnson** from the Common Committee (CC) was present. The board had previously approved the fence replacement with the black locus, but there is a supply issue with the black locus. An option suggested was to do a different, but similar-looking cedar which is similarly rot resistant. It would be more cost effective.

**D. Jorschick** motioned to approve use of the cedar. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion 4-0.

#### **1705 UPDATE**

Jan from Vermont Preservation Trust will be there in a few weeks. He does not want anybody there besides somebody to get him into the building and give him a summary. There were some folks out last week for the Wetland Delineation, but further updates are still in process.

#### **REVIEW FY'25 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT**

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

#### **REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS**

**G. Barrows**, Treasurer, was present and went over the Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

##### **Bouncy House Question**

**R. Davanon** had written questioning if those with small properties that cannot sustain a bouncy house and were not allowed to put them on the Common. She thought this created an inequity between those that had a large acreage and those who do not. **J. Andrews** noted that what they learned last year is that it is a serious liability if somebody gets hurt. The job of the Selectboard is to protect the interests of the entire town and she does not think we are prepared to take on that sort of risk.

The board also received correspondences from **K. Tyler** regarding a traffic calming suggestion, the Essex Rescue Quarterly Report, LCATV Schedule change, notice of finalization of the Little Free Library on the Common, Common Committee recommendations to suggest approval of the fence funding, and several emails regarding inclusion.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

The board discussed their meeting schedule for August.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**P. Haller** moved to find that premature public knowledge of matters relating to personnel would place the Town at a significant disadvantage. **D. Jorschick** seconded, motion carried 4-0.

**P. Haller** moved to enter an executive session on matters of personnel and invited Holly Delisle to attend. **D. Jorschick** seconded, motion carried 4-0.

**P. Haller** moved to exit the executive session at 10:06pm. **D. Jorschick** seconded, motion carried 4-0. No action was taken.

#### **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Haller  
Selectboard Vice-Chair

Callie Hamdy  
Minute Clerk

**GUEST LIST**


Bill Cleary  
John Doane  
Barb Peck  
Carol Winfield  
Lori Johnson  
Dave Gauthier  
Lynn Gauthier  
Harmony Cism


Dick Lavallee  
Dave Lavallee  
Ben Bornstein  
Wendy Doane  
Kim Guidry  
Ira Allen  
Randy Barrows  
Kirsten Tyler  
Sarah Roberts

Rebecca Davanon  
Meghan Orisko  
Michelle Brennan  
Sarah Pinto  
Alyssa Koop  
Elias Rosenblatt  
Margaret (RSA)


ADOPTED THIS 14<sup>th</sup> TH DAY OF August 2025.

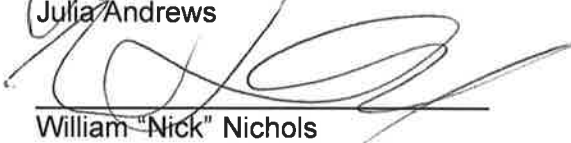
**WESTFORD SELECTBOARD**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Mathieu, Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pat Haller

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deb Sawyer Jorschick

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Julia Andrews

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William "Nick" Nichols