

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 9, 2025
Draft Minutes**

Present:	Pat Haller Julia Andrews Deb Jorschick Casey Mathieu Nick Nichols	Greg Barrows Tommy O'Connor Callie Hamdy Sean Cushing
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Guests: see attached.

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 Municipal Planning Grant under discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

MINUTES

J. Andrews motioned to accept the September 25, 2025 minutes as amended. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. On October 15th there will be a board meeting, and it will also be an open forum for the public where they will discuss the regional plan and transportation. It is a chance to ask any and all questions the public may have.

ROAD SCHEDULE

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, was present and went over the Road Schedule from September 26, 2025 to October 9, 2025.

REVIEW FY'26 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

G. Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'26 Highway Budget Status Report.

COMMON HALL BUDGET REQUEST

Kim Phinney from the Westford Common Hall (WCH) was present to present their budget request. She described some of the challenges the WCH has in funding their services. They do not have an ADA compliant bathroom. When there is a large event in warm weather they balance this by putting an accessible portalet on the back deck, but that is not possible most of the year. They are asking for \$4,500, which is an increase from their request last year.

Kim Guidry was present. She asked what fundraising opportunities the WCH has in mind to offset their increased monetary need. **K. Phinney** explained the town used to fund the WCH to \$4,500, but Covid and other restraints decreased the amount the town gives the WCH. They continue to look for foundation dollars. Some events are by donation only because they do not want to put most events for the community under a high pay ceiling. They often make \$200 per evening for movie showings and concerts.

Lori Johnson was present. She thought the allocation for the WCH had been decreased because the town had given the WCH a significant chunk of the ARPA money in the hopes they would become self-sufficient. **K. Phinney** noted that the ARPA money was infrastructure based, and it is a really different type of money than self-sufficiency. The funding did however allow them to weatherize the building, put in heat pumps, and replace the furnace. These are all different than long range stability.

Carol Winfield was present. She wondered if any grants had been pursued for the ADA bathroom. **K. Phinney** explained they have looked and had hoped to do it with the ARPA money, but with inflation that was not possible. Federal money is also gone. **Barb Peck** was present and asked how much money was left of what they were afforded in the past. **K. Phinney** responded their annual budget is around \$20,000. They have no paid staff. The distinction she wanted to make around the ARPA money is that it was restricted money for a specific use that needed to be spent in a specific time frame. The town is not aware of any organizations that were afforded ARPA money that still have any left. Many could not do all of their work because of cost increases.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION BUDGET REQUEST

The Westford Conservation Commission (WCC) was level funded.

HARDWARE LIFECYCLE (VTC TECH)

T. O'Connor noted that VTC Tech sent over the current hardware life cycle. The town usually extends their tech use by some time, which is a good thing. There are a few computers overdue for lifecycle services. They are going to go through and see what ones can continue to be used. **D. Jorschick** discussed replacing all the desktops with laptops to increase usability for town staff away from their desks and alleviate the use of staff using their personal laptops. **C. Hamdy** agreed with the spirit of what **D. Jorschick** was saying, but brought up that current space constraint, such as desk space, would be made more difficult through use of a laptop for some staff members, such as wanting an ergonomic keyboard and a larger monitor than a laptop could provide.

FALL TRAIL CLOSURES

Jim Anderson had communicated with the Selectboard that after the last Selectboard meeting he noticed that there was an increase of users on Schultz Trail after it was discussed. The Andersons are requesting that the board potentially, once the trail maintenance document is finalized, close it during hunting season to limit the traffic so the landowners can use the land for what they acquired it for. **C. Mathieu** does not think it is an issues for the landowners outside of the hunting season since it is a public trail and people are expected to be walking it.

The Andersons are asking for a one time closure for this year to alleviate any potential strain on the landowners. **J. Andrews** asked for clarification on what hunting season it would cover. Rifle and Muzzleloader. **P. Haller** thinks this would be a good gesture for the town to make. He thinks we should be careful about who the trails are closed to and if a motion is made the motion should include due access for all that have legal right of way through the trail. It should be closed to the public except for those who have legal right of way on the trail. **J. Andrews** recognized Ben Bornstein's right to use the trails. If the residents of the properties are out

hunting, the intersection of his use while they are closed to the public and the landowner hunting could be a dangerous. Would there be any way to mitigate this? **B. Bornstein** responded he wears bright yellow reflectors etc. and knows the first rule of hunting is that you identify what something is before you shoot. He also feels his neighbors are responsible.

Dick Lavallee was present. He does not know why we should be restricting the use hunting or not because the Andersons knew the trail was present when they bought the property. **P. Haller** suggested amending the closure dates to include archery season which started on October 1. **C. Winfield** asked if they were talking about closing all town trails, just ones through private property, or just one specific trail? **C. Mathieu** noted the request was just for the private property trails. **C. Winfield** asked if this meant all private property trails? Yes. **C. Mathieu** reminded all in attendance that this would just be a one off instance until the document is complete.

P. Haller motioned to close the trails for public access to the public but not to those who have legal right of way on all trails except for the trails at Misty Meadows and Maple Shade from the time of October 9, 2025 to December 14, 2025. **T. O'Connor** noted that from running trail networks the difference is that if you are stopped by a warden for hunting and you are on a closed trail if you can provide the written agreement from the landowner you do not get a charge of trespassing from the game warden. One of the things he had to deal with when he worked for VASA is written landowner permission on their person. **J. Andrews** though this made sense because it puts it on the landowners who are requesting this in the first place. **P. Haller** thought that goes too far in the context policing if somebody can use their land as they like. **J. Andrews** does not know jurisdictionally if we have any enforcement right, the enforcement of this would be on the property owner. **N. Nichols** seconded.

Dick Lavallee asked how this would affect Covey Road since there are multiple homeowners who access Stoney Ridge from there. Those that have land on that trail would have access to the whole trail. **B. Peck** asked how this would be enforced. **P. Haller** thinks if the town agrees to the motion they will ask the Conservation Commission to put up signage saying Trail Closed. **B. Peck** understands that but how is it going to be enforced if people go on the trail anyways? **J. Andrews** thought if somebody goes on the trail it is up to the landowners to call a game warden or a sheriff. Westford has no law enforcement. **B. Bornstein** thought we should emphasized anybody that has a legal right to the using the trail on the signage because there is a right of way, a public right of way. **N. Nichols** is comfortable with the motion because it is what the landowners are asking us to do, they are not asking us to enforce it. Motion passed 5-0.

BEAVER DECEIVER AGREEMENT

The town had asked for **C. Winfield** to go back to Protect Our Wildlife (POW), who are giving us the grant, asking them to tailor the agreement more to the town's needs. They have included the things we have asked. **P. Haller** motioned to accept the memo of understanding with POW for \$4,000. He also motioned that we shift from the volunteer work Carol has done to spearhead the project to the Town Administrator. **N. Nichols** seconded. **K. Guidry** asked if it was a 3 year commitment.? That was true. How long do the deceivers last? **P. Haller** has heard they last indefinitely. With discussions with the town of Monkton they have seen ones

operated for 10+ years. **K. Guidry** asked if it lasts for 2.5 years, is the MOU still that we cannot trap the beavers there? That was correct but only limited to the location of the deceiver.

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, understood that the installation was partially out of the Right of Way. If that is the case we would need permission from the landowners because water will get dammed up on their side of the property and if volunteers are cleaning it they need permission to do that. He thinks that needs to be looked at before it goes forward. He asked how long the resident led maintenance was occurring for? **P. Haller** thinks we should find out from Beaver Deceiver if this goes off the right of way and by how much. He would like to see the board accept the MOU given we can install it. Motion passed 5-0. **P. Haller** motioned to ask Tommy with figuring out the logistics of the project including access, possibly on private land for both installation and continued maintenance. Continued maintenance would be volunteers of the town. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

SAFETY/LIABILITY OF 1705 PROPERTY

We had received a few emails as well as in person requests asking for permission to go on the 1705 property. What are we allowing/not allowing on the property in the current space? In past events people have used the property for parking and seating. The safety near the building is mostly in question. **Maria Barden**, Assistant Town Clerk and Administrative Assistant, wanted language the office staff could use if asked.

P. Haller noted 1705 is a contaminated site and we still do not have a corrective action plan. It is mostly between the existing garage and what's known locally as the Hotel (1695 VT Route 128). It has not been remediated. He thinks the town should not want people on the property as there are potential health exposures. Regarding the request in Correspondence asking for permission to use a metal detector on the site he thinks we should refrain. It could bring people into contact with the contamination, and the town has yet to do the archaeological study required for the site. Metal detecting could put that in jeopardy. He does not think the town should let anybody on the property but does not think parking and seating roadside for 4th of July is a problem. **Dave Gauthier** has been maintaining around the house with permission, but the other uses are risky for the town. **J. Andrews** thinks if somebody got curious and poked around in the house it is unsafe. **D. Jorschick** wondered if we should post a no trespassing at the house and potentially the property. **P. Haller** thinks once we post it we should have the people we allowed on the site recorded somewhere for posterity.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT

Max Tyler, Planning Commission (PC), was present. As a result of ACT 181, he had followed up with CCRPC regarding municipal planning and what we would need to do to be prepared for the next land use map update, updating the town plan, public outreach, etc. A municipal planning grant (MPG) came up to fund those activities. We can get one municipal planning grant per year, and it would have to be for a specific project. The land use and town plan update are both far out, however. CCRPC cautioned that we would be early, but that we could apply, nonetheless. We have a month to get the application in.

In those discussions, 1705 came up as well as a potential municipal office update. Max has not done anything related to those topics, but it came up as a valid use for a MPG. The timing of that might be more compelling than the original public outreach use. The PC would like

direction from the Selectboard. The max grant amount is \$30,000 and requires the town to have matching funds of 10% for any grant given. CCRPC gave an example for the MPG of cost estimations for preservation of the house on 1705 vs building a new office or public outreach for those projects. Do we want to do the application and what do we want to apply for?

N. Nichols asked if those are the only two options or is there something in between. The conceptual plan of retrofitting the 1705 house is a very specific choice. Is there an option to do something more general? **M. Tyler** did not have a specific answer. He thinks the more specific the request the more likely it will be accepted. **N. Nichols** is very interested in helping the town figure out what they want to do with that property. **Harmony Cism**, Zoning Administrator and Planning Coordinator, had sent a document that describes the details of MPGs and what they require. It is a point based system. **P. Haller** noted they do have a plan, they have talked about and hired someone a wetland delineation has been done. The step to hold a public forum was to assess the existing conditions of the 1705 building and potential cost for it to be used as an office on the first floor. Once they had that information they felt they would be able to plan outreach to residents. He thought we would hire an architect to do the plan and then another group to assist with outreach. **H. Cism** noted that CCRPC wanted an answer tomorrow morning so they could start writing the grant.

B. Peck is in agreement with Max. Why don't we have some sort of a procedure to do this? Where is the process to carry out what Max is saying? Is it the Planning Commission? Is it the Selectboard? She looks at it like the PC's duties. **H. Cism** noted that this sort of process is usually done by the Town Planner, of which Westford has not had for two years. **B. Bornstein** appreciated Max coordinating this with him, he volunteered to assist. **N. Nichols** was reminded of the earlier question about hiring a Town Planner. We had previously looked at sharing a town planner with another town. **M. Tyler** noted this subject was the initial purpose of his, Harmony, and Holly's meeting with CCRPC some time ago. In CCRPC's opinion if it was zoning administrator sharing that is something that seems doable, however with town planners that is not the case. If we can find a sister town that with or without the CCRPC's help they should try that. **H. Cism** suggested reaching out to the planning and zoning listservs.

T. O'Connor had met with the architecture firm. No estimate yet, however they understood the last structural report. Their main concern is that in its current state the house would be fairly large investment to make it a commercial or office space based on the HVAC and the required insulation requirements. It would come with a very large price tag.

P. Haller motioned to empower Harmony Cism to spearhead the MPG with CCRPC focused on 1705 with creating a plan that includes the assessment and cost estimate from an architect to bring the building to an ability to use it as a commercial office space on the first floor. Further as an outreach component in 2026 we are looking for assistance on hiring somebody to do outreach in 2026 to facilitate the public engagement with this information. **M. Tyler** thinks we need at least some gross estimate of what it would be to replace the building so it can be compared against the renovation cost. It was **H. Cism's** understand if we receive the full amount of the grant it would only cover part of the estimate so she does not know if it will cover both items. **M. Tyler** asked cannot we organize the project as we are getting \$30,000 and within that we have three deliverables. Whoever we hire would have to work within those

numbers. **L. Johnson** brought up the Town Office Feasibility Study done in 2023 and wondered if the town even needed a new design.

J. Andrews moved to empower Harmony Cism and the PC to develop a MPG application to continue an assessment of cost to convert the 1705 property to municipal usage and solicit input from the town. **C. Mathieu** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

REVIEW FY'26 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

G. Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'26 General Fund Budget Status Report.

J. Andrews moved to authorize the treasurer to access the contingency fund to pay town expenses as needed during FY'26. **C. Mathieu** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

REVIEW & APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Covey Road/Old #11 Road 3 Way Stop Survey was now available. We had also gotten correspondence regarding using a metal detector on 1705 which had already been addressed.

New Library Director

The Library had hired the new Library Director. Bree has already started onboarding her and will continue next week.

Naked Individual at Milton Town Forest

From what **P. Haller** understands the person that does the streaking avoids towns that have ordinances that would bear them a fine. We do not have an ordinance regarding being naked publicly in Westford, but other towns do. This person strategically finds the communities that would provide the least amount of consequence. **J. Andrews** does not think this needed to be addressed urgently but could be a good thing for Tommy to do when he is not busy.

Brookside Pigs

This was an ongoing issue where pigs, goats, and fowl all owned by Brittany Sweet occupy Brookside Road and create safety issues for drivers and pedestrians. Last time we had spoken to Brittany we did not have the livestock ordinance. Now we do. The enforcement individual of that is Sheriff. **J. Andrews** noted that the enforcement officer can give a civil penalty. If it were her she would interpret that as the enforcement officer. **J. Andrews** moved to make one of the office employees an enforcement officer and ask them to send a letter to Brittany sweet for a first-time offense. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

COMMUNICATION

Communicate about closed trails. FPF, ask the Conservation Commission closure signs, newsletter.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

C. Mathieu moved that premature public knowledge that we are about to discuss will put the town at a significant disadvantage. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 5-0. C. Mathieu

motioned to go into executive session and to invite Tommy and Callie to the meeting. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Casey Mathieu
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Max Tyler
Carol Winfield
Lynn Gauthier
Dick Lavallee
Harmony Cism
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Lori Johnson
Ben Bornstein
Barb Peck
Kim Phinney
Kati Anderson
Jim Anderson