

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 25 2025
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 Zoning Permit Approval.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carol Winfield asked if they were going to make a decision on if they were moving forward on the beaver deceivers. **C. Mathieu** asked if Carol wanted to know tonight or at a later date. Carol wanted to know tonight. **J. Andrews** noted that the board needs to discuss the terms of the contract, which is something that needs to be done in executive session.

MINUTES

D. Jorschick motioned to accept the September 11, 2025 minutes as amended. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. The Municipal Energy Resilience Program that is working with Library needs to use those funds in the next 4-5 months or else lose the funds.

ERRORS & OMISSIONS

Terri Sabens, Assessor, had found an error on 1705 in the Grand List where the name had not been changed over to the Town. That change had been made, and the Errors & Omissions required the board to sign off on them.

ZONING PERMIT APPROVAL

Harmony Cism, Zoning Administrator, was present. The Westford Conservation Commission (WCC) had applied for a conditional use permit with the Developmental Review Board (DRB) for their new bridge on Misty Meadows. The Selectboard needs to approve the waiver of the fees.

C. Mathieu motioned to approve. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 5-0. **Kirsten Tyler** from the Westford Conservation Commission was present. She commented that the waiving of the fees they had done it previously before. She asked if it was possible to make some sort of motion or new rule that waives the fees for the internal organizations of the town. **P. Haller** motioned to change the permitting fee schedule so that if the applicant is both the receiver and

applicant then the fees should be waived. **J. Andrews** noted that the ability to do this depends on state statute. **T. O'Connor** will investigate that.

ROAD SCHEDULE

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, was present and went over the Road Schedule from September 12, 2025 to September 25, 2025.

BILL COOK RD/UNDERHILL TOWN REIMBURSEMENT

The road crew from Underhill takes care of Bill Cook Road for us in the winter and has done so for decades since our section is so small in length. The Road Foreman would like to be compensated for that work in some way to offset the material they are using. **J. Andrews** moved to grant permission to the Road Foreman to have a discussion with Underhill about some sort of compensation for their work on Bill Cook Road. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

REVIEW FY'25 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

CCRPC ANNUAL REPORT

Charlie Baker from CCRPC was present. He went over the CCRPC Annual Report. He discussed Westford's current projects with stop sign studies and other traffic calming related measures. Regionally they are working on housing, transportation, the Communications Union Districts (CUD), and clean water.

N. Nichols had questions about the transportation program for elderly and disabled adults. Compared to the other rural towns in Chittenden County does Charlie feel that Westford residents do not take advantage of that as much as it could be? **C. Baker** noted that each town has different rules about what they are willing to pay for, so it is highly variable from town to town. Transportations costs have increased so there is more demand on such services but cannot speak to Westford in particular. For some towns it has been a significant cost increase, however.

P. Haller talked about potential public forums for the 1705 Project and wondered if CCRPC could help with that planning process. They could. **J. Andrews** shouted out Ben Bornstein for being such a great representative to the CCRPC. His involvement has allowed the board greater information and knowledge.

OFFICE WINDOWS UPGRADE/COMPUTER REPLACEMENT

Microsoft is sunseting its Windows 10 Operating System and the town computers need to be upgraded to Windows 11. Not all the computers used in the office are compatible with Windows 11 due to their age and will need replacement. VTC Tech, who does IT for the Town, is quoting \$1050.00 for the upgrade and computer replacement.

ETHICS TRAINING REMINDER

Maria Barden, the Town's Ethic's Liaison, wanted to remind those in town positions (employees and board members applicable) that require the State Ethics Training, that the deadline is coming up. The State recently extended the deadline to September 30th.

Additionally, some board members, for which the training was applicable, had recently told her they felt the training was not necessary to take when the State Ethics Committee is understaffed and no longer taking questions from the town liaisons. They had asked Maria what the repercussions were for somebody that does not take the training. VLCT had provided clarity to those questions. While the law requiring the ethics training does not include an explicit penalty for not taking the training it is still statutorily required for the applicable parties. VLCT also said that failure to comply would likely constitute grounds for removal of that member for cause by the Selectboard, may subject that member to a writ of mandamus in court to compel them to faithfully perform their statutorily required duties, and could constitute grounds for challenging a decision rendered by the board of which they are a member.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND USE DISCUSSION

P. Haller updated the group on the Trail Maintenance policy. This is a collaborative policy between the town and the land owners for which trails go across. Wendy Doane, a previous Selectboard member had been crucial in getting this off the ground and continues to be involved. He noted this is not the meeting to ratify the use policy. He would like feedback from the board on how they feel about this version. There were some changes that he thought were better suited to being amendments to existing ordinances such as the Trail Use ordinance and the Dog Ordinance. This would ensure that the items discussed in the Trail Maintenance policy align with what we also have in our other potentially applicable policies.

Something that one landowner wanted was the limitation of use and/or closure of use of those trails during hunting season. That would be from October 1st through about December 15th. **J. Andrews** did not think that was important but noted that every day of the calendar year is a hunting season and does not want to be in the position as a board to be continually updating based on landowner preferences. The previous Selectboard had similar concerns.

Barb Peck was present. She thinks Westford has to be extremely careful about policing hunting season. She does not think the town should be talking about that unless the town has a way to enforce, but that is impossible in her view. **P. Haller** clarified that this would close the trail for public trail use during hunting season, noting that legally we are allowed to close a trail. **J. Andrews** noted that if we are going to create an ordinance it will be going through the lawyer anyway. Anybody hunting on land that are not welcome would be enforced through the state game management.

Jim and Kati Anderson were present. They just clarified that the statute does state trails can be closed for various reasons including hunting season. The way they would prevent people from being on their land legally is by posting the land. **C. Winfield** wondered if they are talking about a few trails the land owners have expressed concern, not all trails? **P. Haller** noted the guidelines are "Trails that are not on public owned property." **C. Winfield** asked if there are a few landowners who have expressed concern and would prefer those trails closed during that season does that include all the non-public land trails or only specific ones? **P. Haller's** opinion is that it would be hard to manage the individual trails and would be easier to say those trails are all closed. **C. Winfield** thinks it seems a shame that almost three months of the year hikers cannot use the trail. We close some trails for mud season, but we do not close all trails.

B. Bornstein was concerned because there has been talk of closing Goodrich Trail when it is the subject of three final court decisions/court orders that allow him access to his property via the trail for all purposes and uses. That has been upheld and affirmed by the Westford Selectboard previously. He thinks closing the trails is a slippery slope. Even to say its closed, for a small period of time is unacceptable as he has legal access. If the town were to close the trail they would be in violation of the law. **P. Haller** commented that the trails would close to the public, the property owners would still have right to use the trail that is on their property. **B. Bornstein** noted that Goodrich does not run across his property. It is used as a right of way access to the property on both sides of Goodrich Trail.

C. Hamdy, Town Clerk, expressed concern on how trails would be indicated as closed. Due to access needs, such as those with ATV use and legal court orders, some trails cannot be closed with boulders or with lines across the entrance because of this. **K. Tyler** noted that they use signs on removable stakes on the school trails and that has been useful. The construction of more kiosks on trails that do not have them would also be helpful.

1705 UPDATE

The Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) Technical Assistance Survey of 1705 had been completed. The survey is written as if a resident might buy the property and describes the Pigeon House and garage located on 1705. In particular they note that the house is of the Greek Revival style, likely built in 1850, although the inclusion of a bake oven and basement kitchen as seen in the Pigeon house is unusual for this late in the time period of build. The fieldstone foundation is lined with brick with the exception of a portion where a wood framed wall was exposed. The north foundation has been reinforced with concrete as have other threatened sections testifying to the poor drainage on the clay soil throughout Westford.

Maintenance that needs to be done include: grading the ground at the rear of the house for better drainage, straightening the back wall, installation of perimeter drainage, straitening of basement walls, gutter installation along rear eaves, rebuilding the rear-center wall, removing the wooden deck, jacking wooden post and partition walls from the dirt to prevent rot, re-lay brick front steps in mortar (or replace entirely), replace roof (within 10 years) to standing seam, re-clapboard and trim rear wall.

PTV estimates the costs as follows. Foundation and drainage: \$80-90,000. Framing: \$35-50,000. This would just apply to making the building livable and does not address items such as if the electrical needs to be replaced and what would be required if we wished to use it as a commercial building.

P. Haller's view is that the close to \$300,000 is a great informational point we have and needed. The next piece of information we should ask for is our architect, asking them to consider what it would take to make the building an office space what the cost would be. We are trying to get to a point where the board can discuss with the public the constraints the town has on the property that could lead to further discussion by the public what their desires are for the property. One question is if we were to keep the building as is could it be used for office space? Unless we forego the wastewater capacity we cannot sell it. If we sell it that leaves us out of our wastewater capacity we desperately need for the Town Office and Library. If we were to fit it as a commercial office building they might suggest we are not talking about the

second floor because we would have to install an elevator. If some personnel were shifted there what would it take to make it adequate? Commercial building energy standard, electrical code, ADA, etc. **P. Haller** directed Tommy to ask Weiman and Lamphere for what we are asking for and if that is out of their scope go from there. **N. Nichols** asked if we had a pile of money for this or would we have to seek out grants? That was a question that needed to be answered.

Max Tyler, Planning Commission Chair, was present. His first question would be what about electrical, heating, etc.? How confident are we that the community thinks one of the reasons we bought the property is for that purpose? **C. Mathieu** stated not necessarily at this point. We did have a public forum on 1705 and the potential for new office space was one of the reasons stated by the Selectboard at the time for purchasing the property aside from the Wastewater capacity. The cost of what it will take is needed to properly inform the public before any survey can be done. **C. Mathieu** thinks we are still in the informational stage prior to public outreach, but that the issue with the building is its potential hazard. So, do they do something with the building now or do they use this information and do something when they do the outreach?

C. Winfield thinks a next step getting the numbers would be great. To have an estimate for fitting it as an office is going to be similar in her opinion if we were fitting it for some other purpose. She asked if they gave any ideas to grant availability? She thought we should start looking into that ASAP. Then, if it ends up being torn down, at least there will be some ground work done so that we can at least say we tried to save it.

REVIEW FY'25 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

REVIEW & APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Veteran Banners

T. O'Conner met with Green Mountain Power (GMP). They would work with Tommy to sign the license. The brackets and banner were then approved by GMP. We should have a policy/ordinance for the hanging of banners. **P. Haller** suggested that banners be restricted to the poles around the Common.

They also received the Sheriff's Report and emails with Carol Winfield about the beaver deceivers.

Dick Lavalley asked for any updates on the Covered Bridge repairs. Tommy explained it is one of their topics they will be discussing in executive session.

COMMUNICATION

There was no outgoing 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. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 5-0. **C. Mathieu** motioned to enter executive session for current contracts and invited T. O'Conner. **N. Nichols** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The board exited Executive Session at 9:23pm.

C. Mathieu motioned to have letter written for Recreation Coordinator's termination and that he have sb approval to sign. Second **D. Jorschick**. Motion 5-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:24p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Casey Mathieu
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dick Lavalley
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Lori Johnson
Ben Bornstein
Kirsten Tyler
Harmony Cism
Carol Winfield
Barb Peck
Maura O'Brien
Charlie Baker
Jim and Kati Anderson
Max Tyler
Elias Rosenblatt
Bree Drapa

ADOPTED THIS 9th TH DAY OF October 2025.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD



Casey Mathieu, Chair



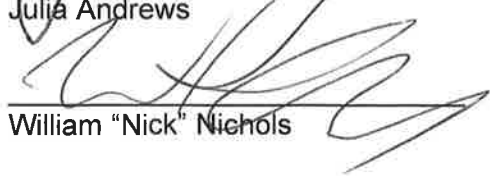
Pat Haller



Deb Sawyer Jorschick



Julia Andrews



William "Nick" Nichols