

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 2025
Draft Minutes**

Present: Pat Haller
Julia Andrews
Deb Jorschick
Nick Nichols

Greg Barrows
Tommy O'Connor
Callie Hamdy
Sean Cushing

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

There were no changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Guidry was present and had noticed the agenda was not on Front Porch Forum and asked if this was a change. It had been missed but FPF was not required by law, but the town intended on putting them there going forward.

MINUTES

N. Nichols had provided edits and those had been provided by the board.

N. Nichols moved to approve the December 4, 2025 minutes as amended. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission) Representative, was present. The legislative breakfast had been on 12/10.

ROAD SCHEDULE

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, was present and went over the Road Schedule from December 5, 2025 to December 18, 2025.

REVIEW FY'26 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

HIGHWAY BUDGET REQUEST

S. Cushing gave the Highway Budget request. They are increasing the gravel line item as we have been using a lot of gravel. They had also increased tree removal as that is another item they tend to be over on.

P. Haller asked where we would be budgeting for the paving of Westford Milton Road. That was in the capital budget. **J. Andrews** did not see any anticipated budget for state grants? Was that accurate? Yes, but they had gotten awarded \$24,000 for a project on Old #11.

BUDGET REQUESTS

Vermont Covered Bridge Society

The Covered Bridge Society is asking for a \$100 donation and part of the request is that we list our covered bridge on their website.

Summer Concert Series

The previous request was an older request by accident and did not accurately reflect the Concert series request. They are asking for level funding.

UPWP MEETING UPDATE

Max Tyler, Harmony Cism, and J. Andrews had attended the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) meeting with CCRPC. **H. Cism** explained municipalities can apply to be on the work plan either with transportation related projects with a 20% match by the town and CCRPC would act as the project manager. There are also non-transportation projects where the town would pay CCRPC \$70 per hour to be a project manager for things such as community outreach or grant writing. These are all town planner jobs so if the town were to hiring a town planner we would not need CCRPC for the non-transportation items. Everything we apply for needs to be a separate application. The Planning Commission (PC) will be talking about this on January 5.

M. Tyler added that the two things that they had discussed with CCRPC that come under transportation is the pedestrian path from the Westford School to the town center. He had asked for planning for a riverside path and that would not qualify for transportation funding as that would likely be deemed as a recreational project. Harmony had mentioned they project that to be a \$35,000 project. Max also mentioned storm water would be somehow funded, and he is not sure what the grant match would be, likely the same 20% so if the town common stormwater project is still something we want to pursue that also qualifies.

B. Bornstein was present. He thought it would be helpful for the board to look at what needed to be put together because there was a deadline of 23rd of January for the UPWP. **M. Tyler** added we are talking about a town plan update for 2028 which is a year ahead of schedule which is because of the land use review board schedule for updating the regional land use maps etc. During their meeting with CCRPC another thing they might consider is public outreach related to future land use in the town of Westford for this cycle which starts in July of 2026 and runs to June 30th 2027. This would be at the \$70 per hour rate. **J. Andrews** reminded everyone that in the event we choose to add a Town Planner position we would not need the \$70 per hour planning from CCRPC.

N. Nichols asked if it was okay to open up the question about the town planner. It feels like this is a variable in this decision. **J. Andrews** noted that having the discussion without Casey present made her uncomfortable, but she agreed the conversation was needed. **H. Cism** noted if we apply for one of the fee for service and then hire a town planner we can withdraw our request from CCRPC at no cost. **N. Nichols** asked when the funding would kick in from CCRPC. It would be FY'27. Could we also use some of the funds to support some of the cost of having a public forum or other costs? **H. Cism** was not sure but will look into it. She believes the non-transportation grant is a staff member from CCRPC.

One of the things **J. Andrews** raised with CCRPC in the meeting is even cost aside, how much more can we reasonably expect Harmony and the PC to be able to execute in the next year? It feels like outreach around 1705 feels like a pretty big project that is necessary and upcoming. She personally feels like the outreach around the town plan stuff is also necessary. Things beyond that feel like they would be great but not necessary. She is trying to gage how many of these projects can be realistically do in a 12 month period. **M. Tyler** shares Julia's concerns. He does not believe there is a lot of extra time being put in there at the moment, but some of that can be agenda driven while it could also be bandwidth drive. He thinks 2 projects maybe, 3 if we stretched it. There are several strategies here: we apply for only what we think we can do or we apply for everything we think we might qualify for and then decide how to proceed. He was also convinced we needed a town planner. We need the expertise and bandwidth to take advantage of opportunities for us at the state and federal level and not having one holds us back.

P. Haller agreed, but 10 applications from now to January 23rd would be difficult so we should probably make it more reasonable at the moment. The board will need to have ideas on what projects they would like the PC to apply for or how many hours they would want a consultant for, etc.

B. Bornstein mentioned a lot of the municipalities apply for a lot of different projects before deciding what their priorities are, but they apply to get things in the works. **M. Tyler** noted there's things like what could be funded, that is a different priority than what might we really want to put first, meaning we did not get the municipal planning grant, but 1705 outreach is something we might apply the UPWP for. It is \$70 an hour, but it would be staff that would actually help us in how to move that project forward in lieu of the municipal planning grant. Something that has been weighing on **J. Andrews** with the pedestrian path is her recollection is that it was intended to be more recreational in nature. It is not clear to her there is an actual want or need for something that is more transportation oriented. **B. Bornstein** noted there is a part of the policy both by the state and CCRPC themselves as part of their transportation plan for Chittenden County is to increase accessibility of town centers. Having a walking path between the school and town center is very much what they are looking for. The idea would be to encourage activity in the town center and for back and forth accessibility.

In **M. Tyler's** opinion the future of the Westford School was in doubt and the Brookside area has public land. He thinks in light of Act 181 that connecting the school area to the town center makes a more vibrant and accessible village center. He thinks the connection would be useful and increase the usage of the town center potential from people and children coming from the school area to the town center.

Barb Peck was present. She does not see a problem with if we want to put a path in from the green to the school. She thinks Max is correct in the Westford School's future being at risk. She thinks we should move the town center from where it has been historically.

Kim Guidry commented that in terms of having a path between the Town Center and the School sounds delightful. She does think the implications of such a path need to be thought about such as maintenance and regular expenses.

H. Cism clarified that in 2003 they had talked about a pedestrian path along Brookside and/or Cambridge Road and then in 2006 there was talk of a trail between the town trails on Misty Meadows and the Common, but one landowner did not give easement so that has stalled the project.

P. Haller noted that regarding the Brookside Road trail there is interest. Now that the road is at the proper width it is tight with cars and current pedestrians. In terms of UPWP he thinks we have to do public outreach for 1705. **N. Nichols** agreed. For one of the applications that would be his preference. **J. Andrews** thinks second priority would be outreach for the town plan itself. She appreciated Max's comments on what we apply for vs what we accept. It might also make sense to add in the transportation path into our applications. **M. Tyler** does not think having a path from the school to the village center precludes us from pursuing a recreation path along the river but seeking alternate funding for that. He does not view these as competing. If we could get funding for both we should go for it.

MATCHING GRANT FUNDS LINE ITEM

T. O'Connor explained there was a request looking at budget season to have a line item that would have essentially a bookkeeping notation of money we can hold aside for any grant that may have a matching component. The most common match % is 20%.

HISTORICAL LEGAL FEE RATES

They are still working on getting this to us, but it is very expensive. Our attorney's rates have changed and then there was ask on what we had paid historically.

VAST ACCESS ON THE COMMON

P. Haller explained that when Andy Doe from VAST came to the last Selectboard meeting to gain permission to cross Westford Road with the VAST trail, P. Haller had noted there was perhaps the desire to use the Common to go up to Westford Provisions as there had been in the past so snowmobile riders could patron the store. The Selectboard asked the Common Committee if they would consider the option. **Lori Johnson** from the Common Committee was present with 5 reasons why they do not want the snowmobiles crossing the common. The primary concern being safety of other people on the common. They also had safety concerns about the Cambridge Road/Route 128 junction due to its visibility issues. They also had concerns about damage to the Common and how that was fair to the public who did not have snowmobiles. They also had concerns about Winterfest.

D. Jorschick asked Andy if there was a possibility for VAST to set a curfew time. That was correct, they have trails in residential areas where curfews are set. He did not think that would be an issue here because the store closes at 8pm. Andy has been snowmobiling for 58 years and has been grooming trails since 1997. Since that time, they have had consistent high quality trails throughout. Most of the trails that come and go are 20 ft wide and very flat which provides good visibility and safety. The grooming equipment is large. The pressure it has on the ground however is very low, a person standing on two feet is 8 pounds per square inch and when they walk they double that, but the ground pressure for a snow cat is 1 pound per square inch due to how large it is and how much that spreads the weight out. They have never once had a landowner come to them and say they have damaged their land. They do not groom until there is a foot of snow. He had talked to the previous store owners (Westford

Country Store and Café), and they noted that winter is a difficult time for a business like this. He thinks the store is missing out on a revenue opportunity because the snowmobiles are a quarter mile down the road and would like food. The groomers are very slow and very safe, maybe 2-3 mph and 5 mph maximum. Andy proposed a way to maneuver the groomer so it would decrease how much of the Common would be used. He thinks anything we can do to make the store a successful venture is a good thing.

D. Jorschick asked if Andy could speak to the liability the VAST club carries? They have been self-insured for four years now and have several million dollars of liability per landowner. In his time snowmobiling in Vermont, they have never had a collision between a vehicle and a snowmobile, and in Chittenden county they have never have a collision between snowmobiles. The Town of Westford is already covered by liability insurance for VAST. At the last meeting Pat had mentioned the snowmobiles park at 1705 space, has Andy looked at that? It is an alternative, but not a good one. They are not going to want to deal with crossing the road on foot. **D. Jorschick** had talked to some snowmobilers about that and they said the same. They want to ride right up to the store, get their food, eat it sitting on their sled and enjoy what is going on around them.

K. Guidry supported the snowmobilers going on the Common. She believes they will honor pedestrians, go slow, and be respectful, but perhaps we put signs up along the trail to remind people and pedestrians? **Carol Winfield** has never had an issue with snowmobilers in the past and she used to horseback ride on the same trails. Her concern on the Common is that motor vehicles are not allowed on the Common and it is a place for pedestrians and community. **Dave Gauthier** was in favor of snowmobiles. It is not hurting the grounds. He believes each sled has to be insured anyway and registered so if there is a problem you take down their number.

D. Jorschick commented that Westford Provisions is one of the only revenue generating things in town. We all talk about loving that store and wanting that store and then when we have the opportunity to support it even more we are not looking at the full spectrum. She thinks we should do everything we can to support the store and VAST and what they are trying to do for us. **P. Haller** is in favor of approving snowmobiles to have access and asking VAST to groom. He suggested we try it for a year and see how it goes.

D. Jorschick motioned to allow VAST to use the Common this season and that the board discuss further how the groomer will groom the trail to be as least invasive as possible and that if necessary discuss a curfew. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 3-1.

J. Andrews motioned to close the VAST access to the trail on the date of Winterfest, which is January 31st. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Jim asked if set up is going to proceed the day before is there an issue with that? What about take-down? Pat asked Carol about take-down. **P. Haller** motioned that from January 31st and February 1st the spur trail is closed for Winterfest. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

COVERED BRIDGE UPDATE

We have made contact with Miles, and we are still waiting for a large beam piece from MA. **Dave Gauthier** asked if we paid via deposit. That was correct.

JANUARY BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

The board discussed meeting days to have their budget workshop. **C. Hamdy** will provide a town meeting timeline to the board.

SPEED FEEDBACK SIGNS

There is a new person at the Chittenden County Sheriff's Department. There is \$4200 to go towards two speed feedback signs.

T. O'Connor had a few quotes. One of them comes with free data collection because they had met Tommy, Callie, and Maria at VLCT town fair. The data collection would last for the length of the device. **T. O'Connor** and **S. Cushing** discussed the preferred location for the device on Woods Hollow at Phelps Road and one Woods Hollow at Maple Tree Ln .

N. Nichols asked if we were budgetary okay to cover the matching requirement. It comes from the Highway expense and was covered.

J. Andrews motion to accept the grant for the traffic calming signs. **N. Nichols** seconded. **Dave Lavallee** was present. He was worried about the surveillance aspect of any that take photos. Motion passed 4-0. **P. Haller** motioned to accept the quote from radar signs for their two signs. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

REVIEW FY'26 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

REVIEW & APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

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

UPDATE ON MAINTENANCE REPAIR & DELINQUENT TAX REVENUE LINE ITEM

The Colchester money had gone into the Maintenance Repair line item when it should have gone into electricity. That had been mitigated.

CORRESPONDENCE

Municipal Planning Grant Update

This had been talked about previously. The municipal planning grant was denied.

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. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0. **P. Haller** motioned to enter executive session at 9:00pm for remediation update and invited Tommy O'Connor and Maggie Kabbeko and Devin Porter. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pat Haller
Selectboard Vice-Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Lynn Gauthier
Dick Lavallee
Ben Bornstein
Lori Johnson
Dave Lavallee
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Harmony Cism
Andy Doe
Barb Peck
Max Tyler
Carol Winfield
Kim Harris
Jim S (Westford Provisions)
Maggie Kabbeko