

SELECTBOARD MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2026
Draft Minutes

Present: Pat Haller
Julia Andrews
Casey Mathieu
Nick Nichols

Greg Barrows
Tommy O'Conner
Callie Hamdy

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

Carol Winfield was present and listed her qualifications in wildlife rescue, rehab, and zoology. She is requesting that the live mouse traps at the library be disabled by opening them when the library is closed because this would mean the mice would suffer. She wanted this addressed before 7pm tomorrow before the library closes. **P. Haller** thinks the solution is if we can get the pest control company to get traps that kill over the weekend instead of the humane traps so that mice are not suffering needlessly.

Lori Johnson was present. She requested that all previous Selectboard packets be available on the website.

MINUTES

P. Haller moved to approve the December 18, 2025 minutes as amended. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. There is a lot going on with the Land Use Review Board. There are impact areas that have been labeled and highlighted at tier 3 designation. This would require anybody trying to put in a driveway or build to permit under Act 250. Ben had also contacted Maggie Kabbeko, Library Director, for the mini grant that would give children books on energy resiliency.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, was not present. **C. Mathieu** went over the Road Schedule from December 19, 2025 to January 8, 2026.

This past week the town hired a fourth road crew member.

REVIEW FY'26 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

T. O'Conner, Town Administrator, was present and went over the Town Administrator's Report. We have begun seeing applications for the Veteran's Banner program and expect banners to go up in the spring. A group of Town Administrators in small towns launched a monthly zoom call for collaborative efforts. Going forward we are looking at budget stuff and going into town meeting.

USPS POSTMARK PROCEDURE CHANGE

USPS had changed its post-marking procedure. Instead of post-marking mail on the day it is dropped off at a post office, now mail will be post marked when it is received by a processing center. This makes relying on post-marking for timely mail needs, such as tax payments, unreliable unless one specifically asks for the hand stamp post-mark to be placed on the envelope.

J. Andrews moved that we provide up to a 7 day grace period for the receipt of the next two tax installments while we wrestle with a new post marking policy. **P. Haller** amended a 7 day period on post marked tax payments. **J. Andrews** amended a 7 calendar day on post marked tax payments for the next two installments. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

SET BUDGET WORKSHOP DATES

The board discussed budget workshop dates. The budget needed to be set in the next two weeks. The board decided to meet at 8am on 1/16 at the Town Office. They also decided to meet at 7:30am at 1/21 at the Town Office.

BOARD, COMMITTEE, COMMISSION OPEN SEAT STATUS

T. O'Conner explained the board, committee, commission open seats up for reappointment. The town will be putting communications out on FPF.

MAILING TOWN MEETING DAY BALLOTS

The Selectboard needed to decide if they will mail absentee ballots to all active registered voters for the 2026 Town Meeting Day vote as they have done for the past five years.

J. Andrews motioned to mail absentee ballots for all active registered voters for Town Meeting Day. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

UPWP DISCUSSION

Harmony Cism, Zoning Administrator, was present. The Planning Commission (PC) met on Monday and talked about UPWP applications. **P. Haller** and **N. Nichols** were present. The four top priorities for application were: 1705 Outreach, Grant Writing, Rescoping Study of Common to School Pedestrian Path, Public Outreach for Town Plan Update.

H. Cism had already drafted the first application for 1705 Outreach and sent it for preliminary review by CCRPC. They had told us it was a strong application. She is looking for confirmation that is the order or priority in applications and the number of hours we would be requesting. **N. Nichols** had asked the PC if one of the priorities had to be dropped which would they choose. **Max Tyler**, PC Chair, supported that the town plan outreach take the backseat to the other applications. The pedestrian path would be transportation funded and would cost the town a

significant amount less. **P. Haller** explained that the priority list was more in timing than thinking anything was less important than the other that is why 1705 is being prioritized. **J. Andrews** thought if we applied for four things we do not necessarily get to choose what the grantor thinks is the most important. **H. Cism** explained that CCRPC had asked us to clarify. She thought that she could get all four applications done in time. The board still needed to discuss the hours for application, although if we hired a Town Planner that would void the need to budget that \$70 per hour CCRPC assistance. Even if we hired a town planner early FY'27 1705 should start sooner than that person could ramp up. **P. Haller** felt 500 hours was more than 1705 might take, he suggested 120 hours. **J. Andrews** also thought 500 was high. She suggested 300 hours and thought that was still a high number. **M. Tyler** liked Julia's number more than CCRPC's. He thinks we could challenge CCRPC to do what they can within our boundaries. **H. Cism** can talk to CCRPC more about that, but we need verification there is the money budgeted for the hours requested when we apply.

P. Haller thought the Selectboard needed to give Harmony the numbers tonight. **C. Mathieu** asked are we putting this in the budget for all the hours and how does that play out with everything? If they have to see that we budgeted for it and have funds available we have to look at the budget before we give a go ahead. The board was overall uncomfortable with the amount of money being proposed. The board gave a tentative number of 380 hours. This was over \$26k. **M. Tyler** offered that we did not get a municipal planning grant this year, but we would have a strong case for a municipal planning grant for town plan updates for the next year.

UPDATE ON VAST TRAIL

In the previous meeting the Selectboard had authorized the VAST trail spur across the Common to allow snowmobile riders to access Westford Provisions in collaboration with the Saxon Hill Riders (SHR) snowmobile club. SHR had staked the trail as directed by the Selectboard in mid-December, however in late December an individual not associated with VAST or SHR had removed the state mandated regulatory safety and control signage.

The removal of the signage left VAST exposed to a serious liability as the trail no longer met the minimum safety standards for snowmobiling in the State. It is also a criminal offense. SHR felt that the image VAST wants to maintain as an organization was at stake and that they did not want to get drawn into a confrontation with uncontrollable residents such as the one who had removed the signage. They felt the Common was not a safe place to send a family of snowmobilers. Due to this they had removed the Westford Common spur trail from use.

P. Haller gave an explanation of what had occurred leading up to SHR's decision. During the December 18th Selectboard meeting the board approved the VAST spur trail to go to the Common. Within a couple days Andy Doe of SHR had staked out the spur. At this time, several people had thanked him and were friendly. He mentioned at this time that the stakes that had been placed by Winterfest were confusing to navigate around. He asked the board for guidance and staked out the trail the best he could. A day later Carol Winfield had been very upset by the placement of the stakes, called the office, and then came to the office. She did not like where the staked out trail was and Tommy sent out an email to tell the board that they should expect an email from her. **P. Haller** had happened to be coming through the Common that morning and saw the VAST stakes. He saw where he thought Carol might be upset about

so he and Tommy moved one of the picnic tables, so it was closer to what it was in 2024 and then directed Tommy to work with Andy to try and change the trail to alleviate Carol's concerns. Tommy and Andy had chosen to leave the trail as is due to safety concerns near one of the trees. Tommy then called Casey Mathieu to figure out the next steps, communicating Andy's inability to change the trail for safety reasons.

On December 23rd, the Selectboard got an email from Carol. She was very upset and said that if we have the trail near the swing set since she liked that less she would cancel Winterfest and asked the board to communicate with her that day or she was going to cancel Winterfest. The board could not meet that quickly since it would not follow open meeting law which they have to follow by statute. The board did not feel the issue warranted an emergency meeting. **C. Mathieu** communicated with Carol as chair of the Selectboard on Christmas Eve. Carol had reached out to him, demanding he meet her on the Common, reiterating she would cancel Winterfest, but being Christmas Eve there was nothing that could be done by the board at that time. The Selectboard then received communication that somebody had yanked and pulled the mandatory VAST signage on the Common on Christmas Eve.

J. Andrews thinks that this is an issue that has required a lot of communication and she values that. She thinks everybody brings something to the discussion. Doing something unlawful to force the board to meet is extremely distasteful and she does not like to make decision on the behalf of the community because somebody has chosen to break the law to get what they want. We have the make, model, and plate number of the car as well as a photograph of the individual. She thinks we should turn it over to the state police.

P. Haller respects the amount of work all the volunteers do but is extremely troubled. This is something that is a solvable problem and could have been brought up during the last selectboard meeting. The board thought they did very well by Carol and Winterfest at the time by having the spur closed the day before, of, and after Winterfest. If Carol had asked us five days earlier about including her we would have included her, but the board did not think an inclusion was needed because the trail was going to be closed on the days of the festival.

P. Haller did not see a problem with the trail's existence period. It could have been brought up on the meeting of the 18th instead of the way it was done. It could have been easily solved by working that out then. The board's hope was to bring opportunity for people to patron the store and now that opportunity is no longer available. He does not understand when we have the opportunity to bring patrons to the store we shut that down and when we have a Winterfest that has multiple partners the action would be to do even more damage by canceling Winterfest because of Carol's personal views on the trail. **P. Haller** does not think anything should cancel Winterfest and they had another 30 days to iron out issues between the festival and the trail. Instead of using good faith to collaborate, individuals made the board out to be an enemy due to the approval of the trail and acted accordingly.

Rebecca Davanon was present. She had no idea about any of this until the agenda. She was looking forward to seeing the snowmobiles come through. She is shocked and extremely unhappy to hear about this and feels this is extortion by Winterfest, especially since the town puts money towards it. It is entirely inappropriate. She organizes the Halloween Walk and it gets little financial support. Winterfest is a wonderful thing, but it is not a town event despite

the donation, and it does not have to happen. She believes the town should be reporting the person that took the signs down. When people have driven across the Common we have been able to submit them, so she does not see this as any difference. It is a potential revenue loss for the store, and it is not something we can get back. Whoever they are should be held accountable. We need to find a way to make sure that people cannot extort the Selectboard and re-look at if we ever want to make a Winterfest donation again.

Lori Johnson thought VAST had no right to put the trail wherever they wanted because the motion on the December 18th meeting did not indicate as such. She thought because the board did not follow the motion they made that Carol was right to be upset. She thought there was a lot of blame to go around. **Barb Peck** did not like the language that had been used when she does not think everybody knows the facts. She does not think anybody wants more division in town. She did not think this was extortion. She thought this would divide the town against the Selectboard.

P. Haller mentioned that Andy Doe of SHR had reached out to Tommy. Tommy told him to stake out the trail he thought would be safest. **P. Haller** thinks the board were appreciative of Andy laying out a potential trail. We have 30 days to understand what the problem might be and rectify it. **B. Peck** said Tommy is not a Selectboard member, so he was not authorized to do that. **P. Haller** said that the Selectboard authorized Tommy to do that. He is the board's employee.

L. Johnson thought the board had more than enough opportunities to follow their motion and did not follow it. If VAST had groomed over the holidays they would have gone over and knocked over the posts that Winterfest had set up. She thought the town was behaving so inappropriately. She thought Carol had done so much for Westford and felt the Selectboard had disrespected her. She is sure the Westford Provision is not happy about the whole thing. She thinks the board needed to get perspective. This is nothing compared to somebody getting cancer, stroke, or heart attack. It was a few stakes that was pulled up because people were not communicating with each other.

C. Mathieu thinks there is a lot going on that exceeds pulling the stakes. It was the demands on the Selectboard on Christmas Eve and not giving them time to see what is going on before taking criminal action. It was Christmas Eve, what can the board do on Christmas Eve? There was no ill intention on putting out the VAST stakes. There was discussion and the board met with SHR. Sure, there could have been more discussion but then the demands and 'or elses' came out. They reached out to each Selectboard member or several members with demand while the board was unable to do anything and such approach was uncalled for. He agrees that things got blown out of proportion.

P. Haller said that when the current members of the board were candidates many of the questions from the public were "this is a divided community, how do we prevent this divisiveness?" He thinks this entire board has been very open to working with each other. He sees the actions of a few consistently being divisive. Prior to the December 18th meeting, there was a FPF post that said the Selectboard is looking to put a trail across the Common. He saw that as directly trying to get citizens against the Selectboard's actions and divide the citizens against the board. During the December 18th meeting, the same individual texted the owner of

Westford Provisions and made divisions. In this case it was dividing Andy Doe, who was trying to do the best he could do and had no idea what was coming and dividing him from Westford Provisions. This caused the board to have to appease both parties. Then that individual yelled at Tommy on the phone and came to the town office upset and yelling, dividing Tommy from others. Then the board gets this email saying that Winterfest would be canceled which to Pat was another opportunity to divide the community from the Selectboard. The board was elected to help bring the community together after Maple Shade Community Wastewater and he consistently sees this divisiveness continuing to happen. He can tell that certain people do not like him and that is fine, but when the board is working towards the best of the community the board has the power in trying to do the best they can. He is so upset about this because it seems like we keep playing this cat and mouse game with the same folks that are trying to divide the community. They keep trying to put this on the boards laps to say it is the board is dividing the community, but the board is not, they are trying hard to be collaborative.

L. Johnson referenced a phone call she had had with Pat on Saturday and said she thought he went ballistic. She thought somebody that goes that ballistic from a simple joke on the phone is somebody she does not want to communicate with. She thinks if Pat wants to talk about division he should look in the mirror. **C. Mathieu** stopped the discussion, he felt this was better served in a later discussion.

C. Winfield felt this was a personal attack and a witch hunt. She wanted to speak. **C. Mathieu** said the board was moving off this topic. It will be on the next agenda. She felt the board was acting unethically and personally attacking her. **C. Mathieu** said he is not trying to create division, everything that is happening is getting out of hand and the board is going to stop now, cool down, and discuss it at the next meeting with clear minds. **C. Winfield** wanted to be present if they are going to discuss this at an executive session.

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.

CORRESPONDENCE

Kim Guidry had asked if the radar signs would be collecting personal information. Ours only collect a time stamp and a speed, no personal information.

D. Jorschick had gotten a call about the cost for the Library work. The library had put out that information on FPF.

COMMUNICATION

Communicate about the open seats for appointment and election.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

C. Mathieu moved to find premature public knowledge of matters relating to labor relation and agreements and confidential attorney client communicate. would place the town at a significant disadvantage. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 4-0. **C. Mathieu** motioned to

enter executive session at 8:32pm and invite Tommy O'Conner. **J. Andrews** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Casey Mathieu
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Carol Winfield
Lynn Gauthier
Dick Lavallee
Dave Lavallee
Lori Johnson
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Harmony Cism
Maria Barden
Ben Bornstein
Barb Peck
Rebecca Davanon
Nate Hendee
Max Tyler
Andre Roy