

integral with the Future Land Use Map. Comments from the land use review board. There was a question if Westford would take advantage of the Tier 1B. Taylor had come to a Planning Commission meeting on 2/9/2026. He made himself available and clarified a lot of things about Tier 1B. This all points to the fact that the upcoming monthly meeting, There a number of municipalities who have opted not to take advantage of Tier 1B. On March 30th there will be a tri-annual municipal forum that will be held at CCRPC headquarters.

ROAD SCHEDULE

S. Cushing, Road Foreman, was present and went over the Road Schedule from January 23, 2026 to February 12, 2026.

REVIEW FY'26 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

TOWN MEETING/CHILDCARE

C. Mathieu asked **P. Haller** if they were lining up childcare for Town Meeting, similar to last year. **P. Haller** confirmed yes, he thinks the board should do so. He would like the board to make a resolution for in the future. He has already volunteered his teenage children and wife.

D. Jorschick will like that to be on a communication that goes out to the public. **C. Hamdy** and **T. O'Connor** will put it in the newsletter and on FPF.

C. Mathieu also wanted to go over set up for Town Meeting with **T. O'Connor**. They had previously had audio concerns from online viewers during a public meeting, so he was hoping to improve that for online viewers. **P. Haller** wanted somebody to read the recently passed inclusion resolution at Town Meeting and suggested that the local Girl Scouts troop would be a good candidate. The other members agreed if they wanted to.

CHILDCARE TAX CREDIT

This was a question brought up at a meeting. Yes, there is a new childcare tax credit on all employees in the State of Vermont. Yes, we have all our systems up to date and are within the statute providing it to the state. The question is, should that be part of the budget process? Yes, it will be a separate column.

NO OPEN APPEALS – SIGNATURE PAGE

This was from **Terri Sabens**, Assessor. This is an annual requirement. It states the SB certify that no earlier than the first...insert language here. The Selectboard had to sign it.

TIER 1B

Harmony Cism, Zoning Administrator and Planning Assistant, was present. Last May the Planning Commission (PC) and Selectboard had a joint meeting to discuss the future land use maps and Act 181. The PC made a motion to recommend that Tier 1B status be given to the neighborhood designation already present. The Selectboard voted to adopt that resolution. That application was sent to the state and they came back with a need for more information, giving the town three options: 1.) provide additional information and try to explain why we only included a few properties in our Tier 1B application and how it would not be unequal to others 2.) withdraw from Tier 1B access all together or 3.) expand it to the eligible areas (of which Harmony had provided a map of the Village Center and Village District).

The PC met on Monday and voted to recommend Westford opt in to the entire eligible area for Tier 1B status. What this means is that if somebody wanted to do a larger residential project within the area, they would not need to go through Act 250 review. Although they would have this exemption for a residential project, they would still need all state permits, DRB review, zoning permits, etc. It just removes 1 layer of review at the state level for residential units. Harmony thinks it is important to note that this is not allowing development that is not already allowed, it only removes one layer of review at the state level. **P. Haller** recused himself from the voting as he had a potential conflict of interest.

N. Nichols asked Harmony for the original reasoning for the small original area. There was a working group that chose that area because it was already designated as a neighborhood area for development in town. Pat noted the neighborhood area also relieved some Act 250 burden. Because the group thought expanding it outside may be what other residents have not been able to participate in vetting, they stuck with the Neighborhood Designation Area, but the state wanted further reasoning for the small space and would not accept the current reasoning at the state level.

D. Jorschick had attended the PC meeting. She heard that it sounds like the state still has not 100% hammered out what this is all going to look like down the road. She heard from residents in the meeting that they have concerns with us going into this currently. It seems we should take the opportunity to step out for 2 years, let the state figure it out further, and then make our decision. It is known that there are other towns that have opted out for the 2 year period. This should be considered. **N. Nichols** asked if opting out meant we could not request Tier 1B in the future? That is what Deb's understanding was. Deb thinks the town has many things before us such as Town Plan review and 1705. Between those projects there is a lot to consider. A lot of people do not even understand what Act 181 is.

Max Tyler, PC Chair, was present. He voted for including all the eligible areas because if you opt in to Act 181, to his understanding, municipal zoning regulations greatly influence the outcome of the development so would be our municipal zoning regulations, the zoning administrator, the Developmental Review Board (DRB), etc. that would be reviewing any developments for residential communities within restraints of the Act as opposed to Act 250 which is state officials deciding what will happen. This does not mean we do not have state ecological considerations, wastewater and potable water licenses that would need to be acquired. It means the developer is primarily dealing with the local administrator in any development proposals within the area. To him that's local control over state control which he likes. Act 181's reasoning for Tier 1B is to promote housing and Taylor from CCRPC did educate us that the requirement that the substantial majority of housing approved in the municipalities is in the designated development areas. Westford's development pattern is not that. Westford's development is all over wherever land is and where people decide they want to subdivide. Max was not going to debate the merits of the state's goal of concentrated development around village centers, that is a separate issue, but that is what the state wants. He thinks change is coming to Westford and voting to include us in Tier 1B says to consider us for those types of developments. The town plan already states this is our goal, but Max understands there are individuals in town who do not feel this represents the will of the people. There is an argument both for delay and proceeding. He worries about Westford becoming a

town that is difficult to settle in and we will become a gentrified community if we continue on this path. In reality we do not have the infrastructure to support big development, and he thinks it will be a hard for a developer to put in a large amount of units because they will have to demonstrate how they would support one.

Barb Peck was present. She had attended the PC meeting. A year ago, Westford was the only town thinking about opting out, but we are no longer the only ones. Some have opted out already. She had asked Taylor if we would lose any grant money by opting out. We would not. Barb felt there were no downsides to opting out, but she understood Max's position. She did not think opting in would solicit any kind of benefit for the town. **M. Tyler** thinks in many ways this is a symbolic motion in terms of: is Westford open to change or are we not open to change? He agrees with Barb that there is not much harm in waiting.

C. Mathieu felt neutral. Lifting some of the state's requirements for development would be nice. It is not that it is necessarily lifting everything but merely taking a layer off and allowing us to say we are open for business. **N. Nichols** agrees with a lot of Max says, but because it is symbolic if we were to vote to expand it would also indicate we would want to do something different than the town plan. There is no downsides to opting out for now and as we work on the Town Plan have that line up with a potential plan. **D. Jorschick** noted that there is a small group that seems to be at most of the meetings held and she thinks there are other folks out there in the proposed area that have no idea what Act 181 is. She thinks Westford could do better in terms of outreach. By no means does she want people to think that they cannot come here to develop, but she wants us to have some path that we are going down. We keep talking about reviewing the town plan, we need to start looking doing so and understanding what we want as a community and what we want to see. She is apprehensive going forward with this because she feels we are being pressured by the state to work on things we are not ready to work on.

M. Tyler wanted to make sure that the board understands what they are talking about. His understanding is that what this does is remove a tier of Act 250 review and puts it in the hands of Harmony and the DRB. He hears all the time about the state taking over and local control going away. The state is throwing us a bone that if we have a zoning regulations, a DRB and PC, and soils acceptable for development that we will be granted local control. We would not have control over septic and wetlands etc., but this gives local communities the control they desire and here is Westford saying no, we want the state to keep making the decisions. That does not line up with how he hears a desire for local control from residents.

Lori Johnson was present. We want to get involvement from other residents and decide if the village center was the correct area to be pushing for development. It is a short period of time. Two years is a short time to gather input from the community. It does not seem like it does not matter if we wait. Let the state figure out what they are really doing, she thinks we do not know what we are signing up for.

M. Tyler noted we have been talking about community outreach. The PC recommended to the Selectboard that we do community outreach relative to the town plan update and the board opted out of that. We have a town plan which says currently that the village center is where we plan development and whether one likes it or not that matters. If it is wrong we need to do a

new town plan, but Westford decides that community development in designated growth areas is not what we want and we want sprawl instead that puts us in direct opposition of the state who wants clustered growth. This is an opportunity to position Westford in a way that is not in conflict with the state. **L. Johnson** agreed with Max that we are going to have to do what the state says, but the requirement is in growth centers, so we have the opportunity to identify another growth center in town. We are not bound by just the village center unless we do not redo the town plan. She does not think it will be easy to get development in the village enter due to the lack of resources. **M. Tyler** agreed but noted that we have identified soils for the village center at Maple Shade and part of the certification of Tier 1B is that we have the capacity to put in development. The Maple Shade capacity is known by the town and by the State. This is why he is in favor of expanding the Tier 1B area to the whole village center. Our current town plan update is not due until 2029. He advocates for outreach prior to that. We need to get motivated to find out where people want development. If it is not in our plan by 2028 than CCRPC will not recommend to the land use review board what the land use development areas are. **B. Bornstein** affirmed that it is July/August for the final draft for the land use development maps.

N. Nichols asked Harmony if we would be able to make a justification for what they are asking if we want to maintain. We would need to provide information on how it would not provide unequal distribution of resources. Harmony thinks it is a hard argument to make **C. Mathieu** made a test scenario that we opt in. What are the chances that we see a subdivision in this area? Harmony corrected that if it were a subdivision of 10 lots that would have to go through Act 250 regardless. **C. Mathieu** corrected, it would be a slim chance of any development, and it also makes him think back to the budget meetings. What kind of revenue would new development potentially bring us? We know how tough it is and we know how much we are having to pinch pennies and we are seeing tax hikes.

N. Nichols made a motion to withdraw of Tier 1B designation. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion failed, 2-1, 1 recusal. Harmony noted that CCRPC did not need an answer until March. Nick motioned to withdraw the motion. Deb motioned to table this until they had a full board available for a vote at the next Selectboard meeting. Pat seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

WESTFORD MILTON ROAD PAVING (con.)

The board had narrowed it down to Pike Industries and FC Whitcomb. Pricing between the two options was competitive. After discussions with Sean, they had decided to go forward with Pike if the board was in agreement. The board discussed the options. **Dave Davio** from Pike Industries was present. He and Sean discussed why the thought the town should go forward with Pike and what Pike was proposing differently than its competitor. **D. Jorschick** motioned to go forward with Pike Industries for the Paving of Westford Milton Road. **P. Haller** 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.

CORRESPONDENCE

Natasha Wheeler from EWSD email bringing awareness of the language on the postcard for the EWSD election absentee ballots.

Maria Barden, Assistant Town Clerk, and Administrative Assistant noted on Jan 27, 2026 around 8:41 am there was a message on the machine about a resident who felt it was important on the town to touch on the violence around the country. They wanted Westford to feel like a safe place.

Maria Barden, Ethics Liaison, reminded the Selectboard about the Legal Ethics Classes for Appointed positions and reminded them that if somebody is applying to be reappointed to their current position they are required to take the ethics training prior to being reappointed. Maria will provide the ethics training information to any new appointees.

COMMUNICATION

Communicate in newsletter and FPF for town meeting childcare.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

C. Mathieu moved to find that premature public knowledge of matters relating to legal and personnel would place the town at a significant disadvantage. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 4-0. **C. Mathieu** motioned to enter executive session at 8:17pm and invite Tommy O'Connor. **P. Haller** seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The Selectboard exited executive session at 8:51PM.

P. Haller motioned that the Town Administrator shall make contact for update from current legal action in accordance with the open court case. **D. Jorschick** seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

P. Haller motioned that the Town Administrator reach out to the Justices of the Peace in order to form a nominating committee per Town Charter to search for a Collector of Delinquent Taxes. **C. Mathieu** seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0

D. Jorschick motioned to adjourn. **N. Nichols** seconded the motion.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Casey Mathieu
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Garrett Bartlett
Dick Lavalley
Ben Bornstein
Michelle Bartlett
Vicky Ross
Harmony Cism
Dave Davio (Pike Industries)
Lori Johnson
Barb Peck
Greg Bemis
Max Tyler

DRAFT