

**SELECTBOARD MEETING  
APRIL 9, 2026  
Draft Minutes**

Present: Pat Haller  
Deb Jorschick  
Julia Andrews  
Nick Nichols  
Casey Mathieu

Callie Hamdy  
Tommy O'Connor  
Greg Barrows

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 Fire Chief Resignation, added Personnel Issues under Treasurer's Report

**PUBLIC COMMENT – Items Not on the Agenda**

Lori Johnson was present. She noted an excessive amount of gravel on the Common and she's hoping to have it cleared by the road crew. The board did not know if the road crew had done that in the past. They asked Tommy to speak with Sean.

**MINUTES**

N. Nichols moved to approve the January 16, 2026 and January 28, 2026 minutes as amended. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

D. Jorschick moved to approve the March 26, 2026 minutes as amended. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**FIRE CHIEF RESIGNATION**

Garrett Bartlett, Fire Chief, was present. He was resigning. The Chief that is taking over will be Bill Fay who has been a member of the department since its founding in 1984. Steve Willard will be assistant chief. The Fire Warden duties will go back to the Selectboard to appoint. Garrett hoped for an eventual return to the Fire Department.

P. Haller thought it would be important for the board to figure out what to do right now with the Fire Warden and potential fire danger before leaf out. He recommended a motion not to allow any burn permits through indefinitely until the season changes or until a Fire Warden is appointed. The state had already cautioned us to be very careful of burns right now. G. Bartlett described how a set date is not always an indicator of safety. We could still have fire danger after the set date depending on the weather conditions. J. Andrews moved to close down burn permits now until May 15<sup>th</sup> or until a Fire Warden is appointed. P. Haller seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**CCRPC UPDATE**

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. The next board meeting is April 15, which will be a hybrid meeting which includes a reading of the 2026 ECOS draft plan. It is anticipated that CCRPC will adopt it. There have been some edits, mostly having to do with

reviewing certain adjustments to town centers and the future land use map. On May 20th's meeting they will be discussing the range of impact from Tier 1B and Tier 3 in the future land use map. B. Bornstein urged a Selectboard member to attend. There was a municipal elected official forum on March 30th. With respect to the unified planning works program, the budget for that has had a shortfall, but Westford's items appear to be on the agenda. There is some pushback on Tier 3. B. Bornstein complimented Library Director Maggie Kabekko for her use of the MERP funds.

Max Tyler was present. He asked that the communications about the Tier 3 summary be shared with the community in an accessible manner.

J. Andrews wasn't sure if we were ready to tackle a solar project, but she works for a solar company and there is a range of federal incentives for solar projects between now and 2028 that sunset at various times.

### **ROAD SCHEDULE**

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, was not present. P. Haller went over the road schedule from March 29, 2026 to April 9, 2026.

M. Tyler has traveled Cambridge Road for the last 7 years every day and he usually avoids it as much as possible in the spring, but so far this year its condition is way better than previously. He attributed this to the road crew.

### **TREASURER REPORT**

#### **Personnel Issues**

Greg Barrows was resigning as Treasurer. The board thanked him for his service. The board will discuss a transition plan at the next meeting. In the interim Tommy will work with MJ and provide some reports.

#### **Review FY'25 General Fund Budget Status Report**

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

#### **Review FY'25 Highway Budget Status Report**

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

The board discussed the purchase of a trailer as requested by the Road Foreman. There was enough budget to purchase. J. Andrews mentioned the random funds such as the salt shed. P. Haller wondered if we might ask MJ to review the list of random funds and make recommendations of ones that did not need to be kept. D. Jorschick motioned allow the highway department to use the 17,500 to use for the needed trailer. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Dave Gauthier asked if we knew what the trailer would be used for. T. O'Connor explained it would be for moving the skid steer and other small equipment that are not fast vs driving the skid steer through town. D. Gauthier wanted more information and asked a couple more clarifying questions.

### **Review and Approve Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants**

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

### **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

T. O'Connor, Town Administrator, gave the Town Administrator's Report.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Access Permit**

Christopher King was requesting permission to change an existing agricultural access on his property on Cambridge Road to be residential use. J. Andrews motioned to approve the access permit. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

#### **UVM Capstone Presentation (1705)**

The UVM students were present to discuss the project they had done exploring possible uses for the 1705 VT Route 128 property. They are a senior capstone class at UVM. They've been working with the Town with improving environmental resilience in town. They've been working on apply a resilience index that looks at community resilience, the same one the EPA uses in regards to natural hazards. One of the materials that had been shared with the SB and in the packet was a map layout that shows the work they've done so far which applies the resilience index to a bunch of different block groups in VT including Westford. What they're hoping to do next is move forward with a Westford specific index to address things that the national doesn't address for the town. The purpose of this is in their design plans for 1705 they can show how different plans would affect the resilience of Westford over all.

P. Haller wondered if we could loop in our emergency coordinator, Francois Ross, as he seemed relevant to that conversation. The students thought that would be great information, as well as information and data about community social events and turnout which they don't have access to. J. Andrews noted the Westford's Future forums could be helpful. N. Nichols felt like a town's level of resilience was related to their volunteerism and if there is a culture of such. So much happens in Westford because of the volunteers. He felt that was important data to capture and the town was willing to provide that data.

The students were also interested in applying for the Trees for Streams project and utilizing that on the 1705 property. The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD) was working with them. The 1705 property was three acres and the amount of trees they were looking to plant would be one acre. P. Haller expressed that the board is interested, but the capstone class will discuss further before moving forward. He also thought the minimum 1 acre was a large amount since it was 1/3 of the property. The board thanked the group with helping them conceptualize what might be done on the property and that they gave them high, medium, and low cost options. P. Haller explained that the board is not making any decisions tonight on what will happen with 1705, this project is helping the board have depictions and ideas of what might be possible and what else we might be considering for the community.

Lori Johnson was present. She really liked the remediation aspects and thought it would be great to have a list of recommended plants. The students did have a list and would follow up. Lori had sent an engineering study to the professor that described plunge pools and issues with the culvert. She wanted the students to be aware the structures on the 'high' option would

be a cost for a community. The students had not yet worked on the cost, but there are a number of grants available to help with much of the infrastructure that we could explore to fund any of the ideas. The students didn't want the town to feel like they are limited by expenses because there's a lot of resources to pay for such.

The students also talked about a survey that could be a method to internalize land initiatives and flood concerns. They asked regarding the example survey if there were questions the board liked or didn't like. P. Haller's thought on the survey was that he likes it but some of the questions were hot button questions in town and he didn't want the survey to explode out of the scope of 1705 and have the community think it's a survey that includes things other than 1705. The students were willing to reorder the questions and come back, but P. Haller thought if there were answers the students wanted to know for their project they could keep them in. The board suggested focusing survey questions in on 1705 specifically. N. Nichols also suggested refraining from putting any map plans in the survey as the board had not decided on doing anything specific on 1705 and did not want to give residents the idea that they had.

Max Tyler was present. Reflecting back on the vote of 1705 he feels like this conversation has been a lot about flood resilience which is appreciated and he applauds UVM's participation. On the other hand, he wanted to ground the conversation in his recollection. The 1705 vote was about wastewater for the town building and library and the potential for a new town office, so he didn't want us to lose sight that 1705 is not just about ecologic resilience. P. Haller wondered when a survey did go out to be as direct as Max just was to indicate that it is not about other aspects the town had purchased the property for, it is just one aspect, the access to the river. Ben Bornstein thought their work was engaging and interesting. We currently have a UPWP in for the staff at CCRPC to do a comprehensive study. He thinks we need to be mindful of not muddying the waters. He cautioned against questions that might distract from the work they've done such as 7, 9, and 12. The board and student group talked about making language in any potential survey as accessible as possible.

Another topic is that they're also applying for a grant with the Vermont Arts Counsel (VAC). This is the bench idea that would have a classic bench. The way this would relate to the VAC is they would go through the process to look for a local artist that would design something for the bench that could be painted by the school children. This could be a continual and annual thing. The board felt positive about this and suggested the art teacher at Westford School as a primary contact.

#### **VT Fish & Wildlife Grant**

Kirsten Tyler, Westford Conservation Commission (WCC), was present. We had received a VT Watershed Grant. Kyle Bach had applied for this on our behalf, and it was for \$5,000. The project takes 1705, focusing on Browns River access and using it as a point for education, adding a level of public communication about what the Browns River access is going to look like. This will help start the conversation on what people want to see for the river access portion of 1705. The WCC wanted to bring in the school and library. K. Tyler asked the board to allow the WCC to do this project.

Tangential to giving approval, J. Andrews was thinking about river access and ecology. Mr. Sherman, formerly a teacher at Westford School, had done a water health project with his

class each year for 30 years. She didn't want his data set to get lost and wondered if we could roll that data into the study. J. Andrews moved to empower the WCC to do the work associated with the grant. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Barb Peck was present. She wondered if any abutting landowners needed to be contacted prior to work being done on 1705. Harmony Cism, Zoning Administrator, clarified that because it wasn't the type of project that would require Developmental Review Board approval there would be no need to contact abutters.

### **Legal Trails Guidelines**

P. Haller thanked Wendy Doane for her continued work on this. The board had also worked extensively with landowners Kati and Jim Anderson, Ben Bornstein, and the WCC. They are not ratifying anything tonight. He's hoping to get answers to some questions. The guidelines have a direction, and he wanted to make sure it was a direction they could all agree to.

- If they all agree that Westford maintain these trails per the Supreme Court decision that the town has a right to maintain said trails.
- Do they recognize that the Right of Ways are across private property and all users would treat them differently than Public Trails?
- Would the Selectboard have the authority over the maintenance of the trails while the WCC is charged with oversight of the maintenance and that also vested property owners may elect to maintain sections of the trail in agreement with the town.
- That the trails will be maintained as walking trails but open to other permitted users such as biking and horseback riding. J. Andrews wanted to better understand this point. Maintaining the trails for walkability, however, allowing for other uses. That was correct and it also helps provide the maintenance guidelines.
- That the trail maintenance conducted by the WCC would follow some reasonable process both for the WCC and the property owners that provides notification of maintenance activities. There is reference in the document to signage. The WCC would be those with oversight of signage. There is a larger discussion to be had on what sorts of signage.
- Regarding restrictions, P. Haller would like the board to agree that any restrictions of public use will not supersede any person's legal rights of access and egress, and they would work with the town attorney to ensure they do not superseded any legal rights. And that any restrictions on trails such as dog leashing, closing during hunting, etc. would not be including in these guidelines but rather added to the policies dealing with those items such as the Dog Ordinance and the Trail Ordinance.

The board members felt they were on the right path and had heard many of these questions brought up in previous meetings regarding the document. P. Haller asked the board's permission to work with the WCC and provide these guidelines to the land owners for comments so they can start making more of a complete guideline set that the board would

then ultimately review. Once that guideline set is up for review we can see if it meets the criteria. J. Andrews thought that was great but was thought we should make sure the guidelines include a process for conflict resolution regarding signage and trail maintenance agreement between the WCC, SB, and land owners.

Kirsten Tyler, WCC Chair, was present. She had contacted the chair of the trails committee for Tunbridge to ask if other towns had documents similar to this one we are pursuing. Tunbridge did not have a document like this but wanted one. That conversation ended up leading into a conversation with employees from VLCT. VLCT was asked if they would be interested in drafting a template for towns to use for a trail maintenance policy as a priority after the Tunbridge case. VLCT was very excited about the opportunity. K. Tyler knows we have been working on this for years, but VLCT is more legally inclined and would know what needed to be in a document such as this. She asked if the board would be interested in sharing the draft document with VLCT so they can work with it and/or provide feedback.

P. Haller is interested, feeling it might resonate with other towns. He asked the WCC to take the reins from here with assistance, including working with VLCT, engagement with the property owners, etc. J. Andrews was open to it and felt like the WCC is an interested party and that might not sit right with everybody. K. Tyler noted that the WCC would not feel comfortable taking it over in this stage. She feels the Selectboard should finish it, but the WCC was willing to provide support.

Kati Anderson was present. She cannot begin to say how much Schultz Trail ruins her existence in town. If we go back to and start over there is going to be a fence put up and it will be miserable. She is happy to help and feels it's an important thing. She cannot wait for every other town to decide what they think the best language is. The Selectboard was happy to continue working directly on this specific document in parallel with what we might be able to glean from VLCT, but they agreed with Kati.

D. Jorschick asked if it would be possible to have a soft deadline on when we want to complete the document. P. Haller thought he was happy to have a deadline. The board had already talked about summer as potential deadline, tentatively agreeing on June 15<sup>th</sup>. It will have to be a work in progress. K. Anderson thanked P. Haller both the work he had done and how communicative he'd been. B. Bornstein also appreciated the effort.

### **Dog Warden**

The board had received an email from Matt Bartholomew, the dog warden. He is giving the board an ultimatum to meet the request he had from last summer which was: a phone, a place to hold dogs, access to registration records by April 30<sup>th</sup>. The board had agreed they would do it for him, so J. Andrews wondered why we aren't doing it. P. Haller noted there is no place to put a dog in cold weather. She doesn't know if it makes sense to provide the dog warden with a heated building, she doesn't know how we would begin to do that. The town had purchased a kennel like structure, but it was at a previous dog warden's possession. The talks of a warm weather structure came later. T. O'Connor had looked into phones, one of which was \$38 a month. P. Haller said that getting an ultimatum from somebody they appointed and in such language is extremely disturbing to him. J. Andrews agreed, she didn't like the tone, but he had promised him this nine months ago and felt his anger was valid. T. O'Connor noted that

Matt did not want to hold dogs at his own property and any holding of dogs would have to be done elsewhere. J. Andrews proposed to step forward in good faith knowing they've already agreed to these things and get Matt back on track. She thinks they need to have a conversation on his input where a good place to hold dogs would be. She's unclear how he would care for a dog in his possession that is being kept off site.

### **Planning Commission Appointment**

The board had an executive session after last meeting, but no conclusions had been reached. Firstly, they addressed Max Tyler. Last Friday Max Tyler had tendered his resignation from the Planning Commission (PC) and since then, P. Haller had talked with him and described how valuable he is as a Planning Commissioner. He has since rescinded his resignation. P. Haller is happy about this outcome. M. Tyler indicated that one of the reasons he had resigned was because it didn't seem like the Selectboard was supporting the PC's recommendations. As Chair, he was only working on the behalf of the members and didn't see the Selectboard recognize it was not him or the PC appointing members, it was always up to the Selectboard to appoint those members. J. Andrews moved to accept Max Tyler's non-resignation. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The Planning Commission had recommended Art Woolf, Kirsten Tyler, and Ben Bornstein to the Planning Commission. Ben Bornstein would prefer the 2 year remaining seat while Art and Kirsten were fine with either of the other terms.

J. Andrews moved to appoint Ben Bornstein to the PC seat with 2 years remaining of a 5 year term. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

J. Andrews moved to appoint Kirsten Tyler to the PC seat with the 3 years remaining of a 5 year term. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 3-1.

J. Andrews motioned to appoint Art Woolf to the PC seat with 5 years remaining. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

### **Common Committee Appointment**

Lori Johnson, Common Committee Chair, was present. Katherine Kearns was the only candidate. N. Nichols motioned to appoint Katherine Kearns to the Common Committee. P. Haller seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

### **Long Term Planning Outlook**

During the budget planning process things would come up as they were discussing aspects of the budget, so the SB had produced a Top 10 list of items they wanted to work on. Deb went over the Top 10 action items and there was discussion on some of that with the public, specifically about 1705. Max Tyler talked about outreach and proactive updates to the public with the SB.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence from Barb Peck about the Land Use Review Board (LURB), email from Erin Ramsey regarding Sanctuary Road mailboxes, Pat Hechmer regarding the corrective actions from last meeting, email from Will Dunkley asking for the SB to show more partnership with the

PC, email from Seth Jensen asking about the student project, and an email from Town Clerk regarding amount of Dog Records.

There was a correspondence from a member of the community implying that P. Haller was not behaving in a way he wanted to be perceived. He's a new chair; he wanted feedback from the other board members. When an email comes to him like that he feels it's a reflection of the board. J. Andrews thinks as a group they've decided how they're going to handle comments and he just happens to be the Chair and takes the brunt of communication.

### **COMMUNICATION**

School Budget Vote on April 14, 7am-7pm. Communicate on Front Porch Forum about the Burn Permits, communication regarding Greg and Garrett. Include those in Newsletter for May as well.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Pat motioned that premature public knowledge revolving personnel and legal would place the town at a significant disadvantage. Casey seconded. Motion passed 5-0. pat moved to enter executive session at 9:40p.m. and invite tommy and harmony. Casey seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The selectboard exited Executive Session at 10:14 PM

P. Haller made a motion to have the letter from the Town Attorney sent to the addressed party. J. Andrews seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0

N. Nichols made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Jorschick seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0

### **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pat Haller  
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy  
Minute Clerk

**GUEST LIST**

Garrett Bartlett  
Dave Gauthier  
Lynn Gauthier  
Greg Bemis  
Lori Johnson  
Kim Guidry  
Ira Allen  
Ben Bornstein  
Dick Lavallee  
Harmony Cism  
Max Tyler  
Barb Peck  
Rachel Trochenheim (UVM)  
Maureen Wilcox  
Maura O'Brien  
Michael G  
Camille Nelson (UVM)  
Grayson Donager (UVM)  
Kirsten Tiff (UVM)  
Kyle Bach (UVM)  
Julia Anghef (UVM)  
Sadie Ruth (UVM)  
Kirsten Tyler  
Carol Winfield  
Kati Anderson  
Jim Anderson