

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
MARCH 26, 2026
Minutes**

Present:	Pat Haller	Callie Hamdy
	Casey Mathieu	Tommy O'Connor
	Julia Andrews	Sean Cushing
	Nick Nichols	Greg Barrows
	Deb Jorschick	

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.

MINUTES

C. Mathieu moved to approve the March 12, 2026 minutes as amended. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Items Not on the Agenda

Lori Johnson shouted out Maria. In the last week she had gone above and beyond to help the Common Committee follow open meeting law by posting the changed agenda to the town office board. Lori has always found Maria to be helpful and a great person in the town office.

Lisa Minor was present. She had been the victim of a vicious dog attack last year and was inquiring about the next steps and expected timeline for resolution as there had been no compliance. P. Haller asked Tommy to give Lisa an update via email. It has been discussed with the Selectboard and with the town attorney.

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE DISCUSSION

Marlon Verasamy, EWSD Board Vice Chair was present. At the last board meeting in early March, the board passed a ballot measure to ask the community members if they want to move the school budget vote from April, where it is now, to March during Town Meeting Day. He was here to take any questions from the board and community.

J. Andrews has wanted this for a very long time. She thinks it is better for voter engagement. P. Haller asked if on Town Meeting Day we could have somebody from the school present at Westford's public meeting to present their budget. Marlon did not see a problem with that, but they have not formalized anything. J. Andrews thought it would be even better if the school board would empower school board representatives to speak on how the school budget would affect Westford, specifically in the meeting.

RULES OF PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

The draft Selectboard Rules of Procedure document with amendments discussed at the last meeting was ready for review. J. Andrews motioned to adopt the Rules of Procedure. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. There have been changes to our response to LURB which he will speak more on in the next agenda item. Things are on track.

PLANNING COMMISSION LETTER IN RESPONSE TO LURB (Tier 1B)

Max Tyler, Planning Commission (PC), Chair, was present.

Land Use Review Board (LURB)

B. Bornstein had given a draft to the Selectboard (SB) at the last meeting. His understanding is that the SB asked the PC and himself to create a response based on that initial draft. M. Tyler noted that this should really be addressed to the CCRPC and not to LURB directly. This is an extended dissertation on why we believe the Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) is the correct area to include in the Tier 1B designation. It made reference to solicitation of comment from the public about an extended area at another time, but otherwise is the current area targeted for growth. This is not the last official position of the PC, but at the SB's request they have tried their best to create a document that defends the SB's choice of the more limited designation area.

This needed to get out soon. P. Haller noted there was one paragraph that describes that they are defending the area they have already accepted which he read aloud. L. Johnson suggested the board read the document out loud because the public had not yet seen it. She wanted what area that was being discussed clarified. J. Andrews read the document out loud for those in attendance.

Barb Peck, Kim Guidry, and Carol Winfield were present and are confused as to why a letter to LURB was in the packet on page 18, but the letter that the SB was currently discussing had not yet been approved. Harmony Cism, Zoning Administrator and Planning Coordinator, clarified they are different documents. The letter is a form sent out by LURB that lays out the resources in each town. It is required by LURB to accompany the letter worked on by Ben and Max that was previously read out loud by Julia. M. Tyler explained that nothing in our re-application had been sent to LURB or CCRPC yet. The form letter included in the packet was the same as the one we initially sent out when we entered Tier 1B for the current area over six months ago. Since they have asked us to reaffirm that area for Tier 1B status it has to be sent again. It is a standard form that every municipality that elects into Tier 1B inclusion has to certify.

L. Johnson thought it would make everyone more comfortable is if we added a few words to the letter to LURB that clarified that we are opting in to Tier 1B status for the limited former NDA. This was not a form that the town could edit, it was a form given to us by LURB.

J. Andrews motioned to accept the letter drafted by Max and Ben as written and send it to CCRPC. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0. J. Andrews moved to send the packet letter to Ms. Hurley at LURB. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Planning and Zoning Report

Harmony Cism, Zoning Administrator and Planning Coordinator, was present. She gave a report of what the Planning and Zoning office has been doing lately.

After the town wide reappraisal, the appraisers have forwarded Harmony un-permitted structures. All have been communicated with, and all are working on coming into compliance. There will be an access permit application coming up, Sean has already looked at it. Harmony asked how frequently they wanted to hear a Planning & Zoning Report. The board felt once a month was sufficient.

OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT

Lori Johnson had filed an Open Meeting Law Complaint against the Selectboard. Her complaint alleged that the Selectboard did not properly warn the budget meetings that occurred on 1/16/206, 1/21/26, 1/22/26, and 1/28/26 and had not had the minutes or recordings of these minutes up in the proper time frame.

The town had investigated the complaint and found that there were no violations regarding the warning of the meetings and that they had been warned within the correct timeframe and had the agendas placed on the town website and in three physical locations 24 hours prior to the meetings being held as dictated by statute. The town did find that there had been a violation in regards to the minutes and recordings being available within the 5 calendar day time period. The Selectboard made corrective action to work with IT to create a more efficient upload process for future meetings, especially when LCATV is not present as was the case with the budget meetings.

Corrective Actions

After careful review, the Selectboard felt that there needed to be additions to the meeting minutes of the budget workshops to reflect the following discussion:

- January 16 – P. Haller proposed level funding for all entities that sent in budget of donation requests.
- January 28 – N. Nichols again proposed to level fund any entity that sent in a budget request of donation request. This includes the Volunteer Fire Department and the Library as well as all outside organizations that made requests.

J. Andrews motioned to approve the corrective actions. **D. Jorschick** seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

- Town Administrator took required training on March 3, 2026.
- Selectboard Chair P. Haller took training on March 19, 2026
- P. Haller also recommended that members of the board review the Open Meeting Law Training.
- Selectboard worked with town staff to add a proper grievance form to the Selectboard page on the town website.

J. Andrews motioned to accept the corrective actions. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

N. Nichols would like the board to be more proactive on budget discussions next year, so they are on less of a time crunch. He would like to give more than 24 hour notice whenever possible.

Lori Johnson was present. She thought that was great first step and asked the SB to become familiar with OML. She suggested a document VLCT had about OML FAQs she found to be better than the training. She wanted the grievance procedure personalized to the town. She suggested that there is so many details about OML and thought it would be useful to have a checklist for each meeting.

J. Andrews thanked Lori but wanted to address her mention of executive session. It is intentionally opaque, so she apologizes, she knows it is hard to put trust into a process you cannot see. In J. Andrews's experience the SB has done a great job speaking up when they get off track and bringing it back to the topic at hand. She hopes this builds a little trust in the process.

Vicky Ross was present. She appreciated N. Nichols suggestions about planning better for the budget meeting cycle. She wanted the budget meetings to be at a time the public could better attend such as at night. N. Nichols had looked at the OML page Essex has on their website. It could be a good model to including the policy and procedure in its own area for Westford.

TREASURER REPORT

Review FY'25 General Fund Budget Status Report

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

Review FY'25 Highway Budget Status Report

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

The board discussed the money for the already existing salt shed and what should be done with it.

Review and Approve Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants

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

Budget Forecast

Greg had been asked by the Selectboard to give a budget forecast but felt he did not have the sufficient information at this time to provide it this meeting. He will be able to provide it next meeting.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Review Road Schedule

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, went over the road schedule from March 13, 2026 to March 26, 2026.

J. Andrews stated that the board and Sean got a lovely email from a resident complimenting Sean for his work. V. Ross suggested that if we find we have money in the capital budget

reserve for items that are no longer needed, possibly redirect the funds to cover Library expenses.

DISCUSSION

Follow Up From N. Nichols and Library Trustees

N. Nichols had reached out to the Library Trustees and met with them. He found some of the communication process surrounding the budget and library troubling. Because the Library has a unique relationship with the town and SB they had suggested an MOU. J. Andrews thinks the SB was not well positioned to direct the Library, that is why there were Trustees. She suggested reaching out to the Trustees and see if they would be willing to let Maggie research this. N. Nichols will communicate with the trustees.

Planning Commission Appointments

During the March 16 Planning Commission (PC) meeting the PC had interviewed the four candidates that had applied for appointment for the three open seats and made a recommendation to the Selectboard to appoint Arthur Woolf, Ben Bornstein, and R. Kirsten Tyler to the Commission. The PC had provided the Selectboard with a description of each candidate recommended and explained that Ben Bornstein had expressed a preference for the 2 year term while the other two candidates were fine with serving for any of the available terms (5 year, 3 year).

Barb Peck had written correspondence concerning nepotism. Max Tyler, PC Chair, is the ex-father in law of applicant Kirsten Tyler. Barb's correspondence indicated that the appearance of impropriety could give others the perception of impropriety and that despite VT statute allowing family members to serve on boards together, that Kirsten not be appointed to avoid perceptions of impropriety. The Town's personnel policy covered nepotism in Section 9. Kirsten and Max did not currently meet the requirement for "close relative" nor did Kirsten's potential appointment on the PC meet the Personnel Policy's concerns for nepotism which surrounded having close relatives supervise or evaluate the work of one another.

C. Mathieu and D. Jorschick spoke against Kirsten Tyler's appointment from a professional standpoint. P. Haller had worked with both Max and Kirsten, and both had been professional. Kirsten is extremely good at working with the public and responding to difficult conversations as chair of the Conservation Commission. He recognized she was related to Max but is no longer. As he tries to balance what he thinks is best for the town he looked into VLCT's handbook for SB's. He read VLCT's wording on nepotism aloud. Since the board is the appointing body a family member would not be appointing Kirsten. He did not feel the SB's appointment of an individual because of their relationship within the body is nepotism. J. Andrews has gone around in her own mind about this and feels it is a cloudy issue. Because of the nature of the relationship that Max and Kirsten have. She does not know if ex-daughter-in-law is a situation where she would feel nepotism makes sense in her head. She would feel different if Kirsten and her ex-husband were still together. It feels like extending the idea of nepotism pretty far out and it does not jibe with the reality. N. Nichols agreed with the other members, he lands on the point that the SB is making the appointment, so he is not related to any of the candidates. He had concerns about the appearance of undue influence. The chair

making the recommendation has the relation, so he would like Max to recuse himself from the recommendation. He thinks Kirsten is very qualified.

Barb Peck was present. She said they have a five member board of the PC. She does not think somebody that has one month left to go, such as one of the other voting PC members, should be able to have a voice to put Kirsten forward. Had Max recused himself there would not have been able to be a three member vote. She felt there was impropriety. Even though Kirsten is divorced from Max's son she is the mother of Max's grandchildren. She felt this qualified as nepotism. She did not think they should rubber stamp what the PC asks them to do. She asked the SB if they had watched the interviews.

Vicky Ross was present. She heard in the reading of the guidelines that in some cases certain cases might not be practical in small towns. In her observation, Westford is suffering a crisis of volunteers with fewer people being willing to volunteer. She thought the SB should be careful on how they make the decision and what precedent they set. It is highly likely people are going to be related across roles in town. It would be a shame to limit the opportunities for people ready and willing to serve.

Carol Winfield and Lori Johnson both spoke to the fact there had been a fourth applicant to the PC spots, Bill Cleary. Callie Hamdy spoke for Kirsten's character. J. Andrew and B. Bornstein spoke to Art Woolf's temperament. B. Bornstein spoke for a long time about multiple candidates as well as his own qualifications. Max Tyler was present. He echoed that he has extreme respect for all the applicants and does not mean to diminish anybody by the PC's recommendations.

The board needed to make a decision by April 30th. They could deliberate in this on an executive session if they wanted to, it qualifies. D. Jorschick made a motion to table the PC appointment for this meeting and move it into an executive session. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Cemetery Commission Appointment

The Westford Cemetery Commission only had one seat up for appointment in 2026 and recommended Lynn Gauthier to the role. She was the sole applicant. J. Andrews moved to appoint Lynn Gauthier to Cemetery Commission. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Development Review Board Appointment

During the March 23, 2026 Development Review Board (DRB) meeting the DRB had interviewed Greg Baker for an open seat on the board and recommended him to fill Max Tyler's seat. Current DRB members Bill Cleary and Jesse Labreque had put in their requests to be reappointed to their positions. J. Andrews was happy to see Greg step forward as he was a new volunteer. C. Mathieu made a motion to accept all appointments as recommended by the DRB. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Bike Event

N. Nichols introduced Jason Boyd of Fairfax. J. Boyd had packets about his event which he passed out to the Selectboard. He is an avid outdoorsman and cyclist. He rides a lot in Westford as the town has been becoming a mecca for gravel biking. Westford Provisions

creates a great stop. He feels cycling could become an economic boost for Westford. He is suggesting a fundraiser for the Westford Food Shelf. J. Boyd gave the details of the ride, times, and routes. He wanted to look into an ambulance volunteer just in case and had already spoken with Westford Provisions for the pre-order of food. He was also interested in asking Bootlegger Bike to do bike support.

J. Andrews helps run the Westford Food Shelf. She thinks this is really exciting and thanked Jason for thinking of this ambitious event. She wondered if they had considered staggered starts to avoid the number of riders from clogging up roadways. J. Boyd had considered it and talked about a few configurations to spread out bike traffic. J. Boyd also suggested they would look at parking at the School. P. Haller voiced some concerns about the use of the school parking lot since it will be fall soccer season so we should make sure there is enough room. Trying to move parking around was also discussed. J. Boyd also discussed use of the Common with Lori Johnson, chair of the Common Committee, as well as insurance for the event.

250th Celebration Update

P. Haller had asked Caroline Brown from the Westford Historical Society (WHS) about what is going on and how things were going with planning. The State had asked the Town if we would provide a celebration. The previous Selectboard had said yes and asked the WHS to plan for us. They had budgeted \$800 for them to do that. Not long after, they had talked about the budget and Caroline had said they are looking for a band and some reenactors. Jason Boyd works with marine reenactment groups for the revolutionary war so he said he could talk to people.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)

Property And Casualty Intermunicipal Fund (PACIF) Visit

They had finished their walkthrough annual report. They provided corrective actions within the Town Garage and Sean is working on that. Fire extinguishers had all been inspected. Ordered a battery for exit signs. Garrett Bartlett, Fire Chief, had asked if we could let him know when the PACIF is inspected next year so he could be present.

Update from Chittenden County Sheriff

Brian Welch had provided a report. They have let us know that Chittenden County Sheriff's department had put in a grant to update their radio communications with Westford as an area of concern. We agreed that would be great. This would make it easier for those patrolling in Westford to talk with dispatch.

LEGAL TRAIL MAINTENANCE POLICY

Discussion on DRAFT Document and Next Steps

P. Haller prefaced that this is not a review to adopt any language, it is just the beginning to make sure the existing language is in line with what the SB is interested in doing. Westford has legal trails that are ROWs but do not exist on Westford owned land, instead they are easements built through decommissioned roads. We have had difficulty negotiating the relationship with the Westford Conservation Commission (WCC) and those property owners. Part of the spirit is to not allow the WCC to be stuck with answering to the landowners and the

SB giving them direction. The document would allow a landowner to manage their section of the trail if they wished to do so and creates a format on how they would maintain the trail with oversight from the WCC to make sure it meets the proper standards. If it did not, the WCC would come to the SB to talk things through.

P. Haller had initially thought to get this finalized by April 1, but feels that is currently unrealistic. We want to be able to have some policy that can be used this summer. It depends on if the committee is on the right direction. The trails have not been maintained by the WCC for more than a year due to the disputes between the land owners and the town. D. Jorschick wanted to table the discussion for the next meeting, wanting more time to read the document and properly absorb its contents. Other board members agreed.

Kati and Jim Anderson were present. They thanked P. Haller for his time. This has been a much longer than a year process, so they appreciate the time and attention. While they do not want anybody to rush, they would love to have a plan in place sooner rather than later.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence from Seth Jensen regarding ex-parte discussion with the DRB. A letter from Max regarding his relationship with Kirsten. Andre Roy had sent an email regarding the Covered Bridge status. The Road Crew is taking some training for traffic control. Pat met with Ben Bornstein. Email from UVM students about 1705 Capstone Project asking to be on the next SB Agenda for a presentation. Call from Kirsten Tyler about significant grant Westford Conservation Commission won to help with watershed/water quality, she thinks some of 1705 outreach would fit within it.

The board had received emails from several community members questioning P. Haller's use of email and Open Meeting Law. N. Nichols tried to read all the correspondences and feels based the response P. Haller received from VLCT regarding his use of the Westford email address, P. Haller's use of such was appropriate. N. Nichols requested that when Pat responds expressing his opinion to make sure that is clearly stated he is not speaking on behalf of the Selectboard. P. Haller noted that one of the challenges the board has when responding to a resident that has sent an email to the SB is how to respond properly without violating open meeting law. From VLCT it looks to be that the approach would be that one responds and cc's the Selectboard. That cc doesn't then violate open meeting law. The only way to violate open meeting law is to start having a discussion in the email chain amongst the board. He suggested it's best practice that if one responds, and cc's the rest of the Selectboard, and then fellow SB members do not start responding. J. Andrews hopes that every member of the board would cc the other board members when speaking to a member of the community, so they are all aware of the conversation and that a response has been made. P. Haller noted all emails to the Selectboard members are public record. He, as a member of the Selectboard, is allowed to respond and send emails as long as he is doing the business of the town. He had an email he'd sent to a chair to a committee asking questions and that, as the VLCT lawyer put it perfectly acceptable and part of his job as SB chair. He thanked the board for working through it with him.

Barb Peck expressed her disappointment with how the board is running. She didn't think anybody has word comprehension or reads the correspondences. She thinks everything Pat

has said is an excuse. She is not happy with how the board handles things and that the board's words that are meaningless to her.

Lori Johnson wanted to point out that she's been dealing with the SB on a lot of different issues over the years and this is the first time in her experience that the chair has deemed it appropriate to write back to residents at length. She did not think Pat was cordial. Past Selectboards had talked about these things in public meeting. She knew that the Selectboard could respond but thought that any board member sending out an opinion was not right. She had not seen VLCT's response to Pat. Even if it was legal she had a problem with it.

D. Jorschick thought the board members had a lot on their plates and that the back and forth was too much. She suggested acknowledging receipt of the communication was a better way forward. She thinks that overall, their meetings run well and she liked the new agenda structure.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

P. Haller motioned that premature public knowledge regarding personnel and legal would place the town at a significant disadvantage. C. Mathieu seconded. Motion passed 5-0. P. Haller moved to enter executive session at 9:40p.m. and invited Tommy and Harmony. C. Mathieu seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

P. Haller moved to table personnel discussion to a later date as the board agreed they needed more information. **D. Jorschick** seconded the motion, all were in favor. The motion carried **5-0**.

J. Andrews motioned to adjourn the meeting, **N. Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion carried **5-0**.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pat Haller
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Dick Lavalley
Marlon Verasamy
Bill Cleary
Ira Allen
Carol Winfield
Harmony Cism
Barb Peck
Lynn Gauthier
Kim Guidry
Lori Johnson

Vicky Ross
Lisa Minor
Max Tyler
Greg Baker
Michael G
Maureen Wilcox
Ben Bornstein
Zach Audet
Jason Boyd
Kati & Jim Anderson
Will