

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
May 28 2026
Draft Minutes**

Present:	Pat Haller Deb Jorschick Julia Andrews Casey Mathieu Nick Nichols	Callie Hamdy Tommy O'Connor Sean Cushing
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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 Chittenden County Sheriff's Agreement Amendment to discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Items Not on the Agenda

Max Tyler was present. A few meetings ago he'd asked about getting updates from the School District. He is not expecting anything tonight. P. Haller thought this was a good reminder; J. Andrews will take action on this.

MINUTES

Dave Gauthier was present. He wanted the public comment he had made last meeting about the newsletter to be included as well as the names of the volunteers who had assisted with Common spring cleanup.

J. Andrews moved to approve the May 14, 2026 minutes as amended. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) Representative, was present. On May 20th was the meeting when the Universal Planning Work Plan (UPWP) applications for Westford were discussed. All were approved. He noted that Harmony Cism had a huge amount of work in this along with himself and Max Tyler.

In the upcoming CCRPC meeting they will be electing the officers for the next year. He also attended a few Vermont League of Cities and Towns' (VLCT) online trainings that will assist him in being more effective with understanding the legal issues that the CCRPC is grappling with that will impact Westford.

Max Tyler was present. He had posted on Front Porch Forum (FPF) that at the Planning Commission (PC)'s June 15th meeting that CCRPC would be present. It is open to anybody who wants to participate.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, was present and went over the road schedule from May 15, 2026 to May 28, 2026.

WESTFORD MILTON ROAD PAVING UPDATE

Sean described the work being done on Westford Milton Road in June and the work schedule. The original date was pushed back one week, work begins June 8th.

WESTFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

C. Mathieu brought up that the town had agreed to provide stone from the town garage to a location at the school. He asked Sean to coordinate with Kirstin Tyler.

NO PARKING SIGNS AROUND COMMON (RT 128 SIDE)

It had been suggested that the town get signage for this area since during Winterfest there had been cars parked all along 128, which was dangerous. S. Cushing noted that since it wasn't our road he would have to reach out to VTRANS as it is their Right Of Way. He asked some clarifying questions regarding all the locations the board wanted signs at. There was a wedding happening on the Common this weekend and he didn't think he could have a conversation with VTRANS prior. The board discussed having the Town Administrator communicate with the wedding party to ensure none of their guests parked on the Common or along 128.

TREASURER REPORT

Review FY'25 General Fund Budget Status Report

T. O'Connor, Town Administrator, went over the FY'25 General Fund Budget Status Report.

Review FY'25 Highway Budget Status Report

T. O'Connor, Town Administrator, went over the FY'25 Highway Budget Status Report.

Review and Approve Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants

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

CHITTENDEN COUNTY SHERIFF CONTRACT AMENDMENT

There had been an amendment to the hourly amount of pay in the Sheriff's contract. It had previously been approved. It was previously \$90 per hour, but they changed it to \$80, which is what it was last year. Nothing changes in the overall budget number, however. D. Jorschick motioned to approve the amended Chittenden County Sheriff's contract for the next fiscal year. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

STAFF RE-APPOINTMENTS

The staff that are appointed on a 1-year and 3-year term basis needed reappointment.

Tree Warden – Owen Jacobs – Term of 1 Year

Emergency Management Director – Francois Ross – Term of 1 Year

Fire Warden – Steve Willard – PREVIOUSLY APPROVED – Term of 5 Years

Zoning Administrator – Harmony Cism – Term of 3 Years

Road Foreman – Sean Cushing – Term of 1 Year

Assessor – Terri Sabens – Term of 1 Year

Fence Viewer – Barb Peck – Term of 1 Year

Fence Viewer – Scott Phillips – Term of 1 Year

Lumber and Weigher of Coal – Kyle Hobart – Term of 1 Year

J. Andrews moved to reappoint the named staff members for their appropriate terms. P. Haller seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

STAFF SALARY APPROVAL

The salaries of staff were as described in the budget. J. Andrews moved to accept the salaries for all the positions named as listed for the coming fiscal year. C. Mathieu seconded.

N. Nichols noted the hours worked and the hourly rate did not add up to final salary. The numbers were still correct. P. Haller noted it was not spelled out but it is defined by the number of board/commission members. D. Jorschick had asked if we could make the adjustment to the PC and DRB so that it was unified with the way the Selectboard's was described. T. O'Connor would make those changes.

Lori Johnson was present. She noticed that the assistant town clerk and town admin have the same number of hours and the same rate, but the salary total was different. There had been an error, Pat believes that this is hours per week, but the budgeted amount is assuming some overage in a couple cases such as for working elections. D. Jorschick and J. Andrews thought it was not laid out, they wanted to list the anticipated over time hours in a separate column.

Barb Peck was present. She wanted them to clear up the Dog Warden position whether it is one person and the stipend will go to that person or if they have decided to share it amongst several people on the board. She asked if the board had received the list of unlicensed dogs. J. Andrews explained that as they understand it they are not doing the job of the dog warden because they want to, this is the stop gap that is the responsibility of the board in absence of the dog warden. If there is a dog that is on the loose one of them is going to take care of it. The aim is to have a new dog warden in place. Nobody has asked for that list, and she doesn't have time to go door to door. Callie Hamdy, Town Clerk, clarified that traditionally at the first meeting in June the Town Clerk provides the board with the list of unlicensed dogs and it is at this meeting the SB gives the Dog Warden permission to go after unlicensed dogs.

There was more discussion on discrepancies on the sheet and clarifying changes the board wanted to make. J. Andrews withdrew her motion because they needed to do a deeper dive on this prior to approval.

FIDIUM PROPOSAL

Fiber optic upgrade had been suggested so we could upgrade the Town Office phones. One question that came up is that we have over \$3,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money for tech upgrades that needs to be spent by December so that could be a potential pot of monies to offset the costs. There is no cost to put fiber in, once it's running then the Town would start getting bills. It was a cost of about \$4,200 a year. C. Mathieu expressed concern about the amount of times Fidium is down for periods of time due to their smaller support team compared to Comcast. J. Andrews thought the other thing she finds surprising that our internet service is not fast enough to support six desk phones. She wonders how far off those tests are from what we're actually paying on our bill, and do we need to consider some diagnostic repair? T. O'Connor agreed. D. Jorschick also had concerns about Fidium's service speeds

and labor practices. She thinks we need to push Comcast and ask if they want to lose our business. C. Mathieu noted the positive thing with Fidium is that the phones are rented so that if the phone breaks they will send you another. What P. Haller heard is that we have \$3,000 for IT upgrades for us to use that must be used by December 31st. C. Mathieu noted the overall costs, and we are looking at \$4,800 vs \$3,000. P. Haller had additional ideas for the monies if not for the phone, such as the postage meter upgrade.

Lori Johnson believes Comcast/Xfinity provides municipal broadband for free. She doesn't think anybody has ever contacted them and told them to up our speeds. She wondered if it was a matter of just contacting them. All the ARPA funds were transferred into the general fund and do not have a deadline anymore. This was done by the previous Selectboard or reporting etc. She doesn't think we should start paying for internet if we are getting free internet.

Barb Peck was present. If we can stay with Xfinity/Comcast she thinks we should. She feels they are a more reliable company.

UPDATE ON NOTICE OF ZONING VIOLATION

Last meeting H. Cism had given the board an update. Part of the update were notices of zoning violations. The board then agreed to send one of the violators a notice to remove a post in the Right of Way (ROW). Then they said based upon the action after that we would discuss further action. H. Cism sent the notice of violation, and they received correspondence from the resident.

P. Haller explained that on September 12th, 2024 the board had taken up this specific issue. He read those minutes out loud for the current meeting to provide context. P. Haller pointed out that the town has provided five notices of violation. He understands that these are our neighbors, but there comes a point where we have to uphold the zoning regulations because we adopt them. H. Cism had also checked with the attorney about what would constitute a cure. The attorney said as long as the zoning administrator, selectboard, and Road Foreman can agree that it's just cut off at ground level and wouldn't damage town equipment that would be sufficient. C. Cushing had agreed with this already.

C. Mathieu asked what the next steps would be. The resident is serving overseas right now and won't be back until November. D. Jorschick motioned to wait until the property owner was back so they could invite him to a meeting and have a discussion. She felt H. Cism had made every attempt she could during this process. She would hate to have anything escalate. J. Andrews is of two minds: She does want to hit pause on this action understanding that he is serving, but what she doesn't want to do is then get into a protractive conversation where we end up trying to figure out a way for him to do something that is not within our zoning regulations because the regulation is the regulation and the board needs to be cautious about making any sort of special dispensation. Doing so might make that action part of our regulations.

H. Cism asked if a conversation with the homeowner already happened on September 12, 2024. He was invited and he came late for the time that it was on the agenda, and it had already been discussed. Then Bill Cleary met with him outside of the board meeting and came

back to tell the board what the homeowner was thinking. P. Haller is very comfortable with delaying until the resident is back and having him in with a clear understanding that we are expecting that post to be removed from the ROW as soon as possible. C. Mathieu agreed and asked who would communicate to the resident. P. Haller suggested he would draft an email and the board with go ahead form other members would send it. C. Mathieu wanted to make sure that Josh directs his communications to the board and not to H. Cism.

250th CELEBRATION UPDATE

Caroline Brown from the Westford Historical Society (WHS) was present. The WHS is not having their usual numbers for the 4th of July Celebrations of years' past. This year they will lay a wreath at 3 soldiers gravesites where they have done some genealogy on them and their service to the country. At 2:30 they will have a fife and drum duo perform on the Common. After, there will be a demonstration of musket firing just using powder, no projectiles. They are still hoping to find reenactors, all current proposals for that have fallen through. Their building will be open, and they will have a focus on American revolution stuff in there. At Sunday at 2pm, they will have a talk on VT's role in the revolution by the 250th anniversary commissioner.

1705 PLANNING

We had a template of things to do from our application to the UPWP. P. Haller thought this would be a good starting point. We had won the UPWP proposal to have a lower cost, but high quality planning support with these efforts. It will be in FY'27. The exact schedule would be unknown. P. Haller went through the UPWP document.

J. Andrews wondered about the first steps, such as unearthing the past surveys and plans and going through that instead of sitting and producing a plan independent of the past. D. Jorschick had sent a piece that was done in Burlington where they had an interactive community event with stations set up where the townspeople could look at certain things and leave sticky notes for what they wanted collectively. It was not a sit down and talk at somebody situation it was a get up and move around situation. The only thing needed was to show up, no getting online, no survey in the mail etc. She thought it was unique and different. She thinks they need to not be afraid to put things out there. Lots of things have percolated and even if things seem off the wall she thinks it's good to have it out there so when the time comes and we have a Town Planner they can see the whole picture.

N. Nichols asked when and how does the CCRPC staff that we get with the UPWP start working with us and what is their role. H. Cism had partially answered this question earlier in the discussion. We need to reach out to CCRPC. M. Tyler reminded the board that last year we applied for a municipal planning grant which we did not get to fund a feasibility study of upgrading the town office on the 1705 property. He doesn't know if that's still on the table or not. He feels this is a more basic project of what do we want to do with the property and he feels the board has some ideas already. We've had the capstone project contributing information as well. He feels this information should be provided to CCRPC. B. Bornstein's understanding was that CCRPC will appoint a senior staffer. Once they do that we can move forward. He thinks it would behoove us to pull records and making copies of them, so they have that information ready to go. While he doesn't advocate for going to the public yet, he advised brainstorming items of interest and what the property can in fact support. The limits that we know of give us a guideline and help us with outreach.

H. Cism offered that she could find a lot of documents related to 1705. P. Haller noted there is a lot available on the Town Website. Harmony explained there is a PC meeting on Monday, and she thinks it would be helpful for the PC to know what role the selectboard would like them to play. P. Haller explained that they would like the PC involved as much as possible. J. Andrews felt the right order of operations was 1.) Gathering information 2.) getting a staff person 3.) meeting with staff person, Planning Commission (pc) and Selectboard (sb) to start formulating a plan.

M. Tyler explained that 1705 project is being run by the selectboard but the PC is ready and willing to assist. With B. Bornstein also now on the PC he feels they are set up well to figure this out. They have a meeting on Monday, and this subject is on the agenda. He wanted to use the opportunity to interject two other points: 1.) it is his intention that the PC are starting to move forward on a town plan update project and he wants the selectboard to a.) be aware that's what he's intending to do as a PC and agree that's appropriate. They have 20 months between now and when a new town plan needs to be approved. 2.) they are planning to apply again for a municipal planning grant. M. Tyler's thought is that the grant would be targeted at the town plan update and not at 1705. 1705 would be handled through the UPWP process as a parallel effort. The planning grant would help us get planning assistance from appropriate bodies and fund public outreach. N. Nichols thought this made sense and with the impending need to get input on the town plan he thinks it's important for the PC to be involved in 1705 to some degree so they can stagger things and not overwhelm residents with too many surveys.

P. Haller thought the selectboard could give the PC an answer as a body. He believes what M. Tyler outlines is a good direction. J. Andrews mentioned getting the town plan moving so that in 2028 we're close to having a town plan to meet the ECOS plan itself. The board was in agreement with this. P. Haller also thinks when we get our staff from CCRPC he would like to see if they can all meet as soon as possible in July. J. Andrews thought this was feasible. The town had also talked about river access being attractive and the flexibility the property gives us regarding potential town office renovation/expansion. P. Haller noted the next steps: receiving letter from CCRPC which will outline who the staffer is and other next steps, work with new staffer and get them on board in July with a joint meeting.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE (Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector)

The Nominating Committee had met on Wednesday. The town has received 15 interest letters and resumes. They reviewed the resumes and condensed it down to 8 candidates they are interested in having a discussion with. They are hoping to have interviews as early as June 8th or 9th. It seems we have a rich opportunity in Treasurer, but this is not the case for Delinquent Tax Collector. It was unclear with most applicants if they were interested in just Treasurer or both. Vicky Ross will clarify when she talks with the candidates. The committee is expecting to recommend a treasurer hopefully by the June 14th meeting or the one after. T. O'Connor is the interim DTC. The candidates all look great and three of them have experience in the New England Municipal Resource Center (NEMRC) platform, the system we use for the role of Treasurer.

TOWN PLANNER UPDATE

T. O'Connor explained that the town has launched this softly. Next week will have a bigger launch, but the Town is formally looking for a part-time Town Planner. Tommy described the advertising and application process.

TRAIL MARKER REMOVAL VIOLATION UPDATE

The selectboard had asked T. O'Connor to turn the evidence over to the Sheriff. It was not a sheriff's matter and was turned over to the Vermont State Police (VSP). Through VSP's lens and the way the law reads it was not a criminal infraction, but it is civil gray area. There is a fine system associated with it. The conversation from the trooper was taken the information and leaving with the possibility it could be a citation, or it could be something that is dropped. They are talking next week.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from resident discussing there were ATVs going down Plains Road and more of a wanting the board to be aware that's happening.

Kirstin Tyler, Westford Conservation Committee, there was an assessment report about Maple Shade logging road. As expected, the logger that did the work did follow best management practices and they saw no problem with how the roads were left after the logging was done. She suggested there are some historic problems with some of that but were not due to Evan Aiken's work.

Public Records Request that is ongoing which Tommy is responding to.

There was also an email from a resident on Brookside that suggests the goats have been out twice so far this year. P. Haller drives past that property every day and he does see the goats in the pens, and he thinks the goats are getting out and does not think it was as it was in the past where they were free roaming but thinks the board needs to keep an eye on it. N. Nichols asked if it was worth swinging by and checking in. P. Haller was happy to do that.

COMMUNICATION

Communicate paving of Westford Milton Road information, 4th of July.

Dick Lavalee was present. He asked if there were any updates on the Covered Bridge repairs. The work was beginning on the second week of June. P. Haller suggested information on that in FPF. Lori Johnson suggested letting the immediate neighbors know so they can be prepared.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

P. Haller motioned that premature public knowledge involving an ongoing legal case would place the town at a significant disadvantage and enter executive session at 8:49pm. C. Mathieu seconded. Motion passed 5-0. P. Haller moved to enter executive session at 8:37 p.m. and invited Tommy O'Connor. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The Selectboard left executive session at 9:08PM

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J. Andrews moved that the Town Administrator contact Stitzel, Page, and Fletcher P.C. (SP&F), the Town Attorney, to begin next steps on the tax sale process commenced in 2026. C. Mathieu seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pat Haller
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Ben Bornstein
Dave Lavallee
Harmony Cism
Lynn Gauthier
Kim Guidry
Iran Allen

Max Tyler
Barb Peck
Michael Miller
Dick Lavallee
Lori Johnson
Caroline Brown
Carol Winfield