

SELECTBOARD MEETING
July 23, 2026
Draft Minutes

Present: Pat Haller
Julia Andrews
Deb Jorschick

Callie Hamdy
Tommy O'Connor

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

Amended language discussed for the Girr license agreement.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Items Not on the Agenda

Dave Gauthier was present. He wanted the road crew to check out the bridge on Cambridge Road as it had some holes.

Lori Johnson was present. She liked tonight's agenda format.

MINUTES

J. Andrews moved to approve the July 9, 2026 minutes as written. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

GIRR LICENSE AGREEMENT LANGUAGE

Previously the board had entered into a license agreement with the Girr's as part of their subdivision. They had motioned that \$500 be held in a non-interest bearing account, but unfortunately the only non-interest bearing account that the town has is the Cemetery account and it cannot go there. P. Haller motioned that the applicants shall submit \$500 to be held in escrow to cover the legal costs. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. He's been tracking when the land use review board might respond for our request for less than a full tier 1 B. Last Wednesday there was a meeting between LURB and CCRPC staff. Final submissions were made. LURB now has 15 days to respond in writing. Ben was at the CCRPC monthly meeting in person and spoke with Taylor Newton and Charlie Baker. The conversation was about how in Westford we're very keen to put our best foot forward and that two years is not a long time to update the town plan. CCRPC does a full review of town plans in advance of updates and will go through with a keen eye looking through the items that need to be synced and amended based on the new ECOS plan that was just passed. They will provide a data update and also provide an array of new mapping capabilities to assist us. He volunteered for membership on the Unified Planning Work Program subcommittee and was approved along with the long range planning committee. CCRPC and personnel came and held a meeting last Thursday with the chair of the Selectboard and with Harmony, Zoning Administrator, and the Planning Commission (PC). It was productive in respect to the three UPWP projects that were approved. There is an emergency energy resilience report due. Ben had managed to save \$2,000 by negotiating a

better deal on one of the audits we have to do, but it's been hard to get people to spend the remaining \$2,000.

There was discussion and a vote on the language access program. Ben personally believes the concept is valid but voted to abstain because based on the SB's direction over the past few years, there was no data or ceiling on how much or could be spent on such a project, but in theory it is a great inclusive idea. During the previous discussions about the project, Ben had raised the prospect on saving substantial money by using AI for translation. J. Andrews came from the perspective that the vast percentage of people that need translation services are not from our community. Did CCRPC parse that out? Ben explained because it has yet to be run as a program CCRPC does not yet know. Based on demographic research from a previous project it identified there is a spectrum of Spanish and French speakers along with other languages.

Max Tyler, PC Chair, was present. They met last week with CCRPC. They brought their project leads and some senior staff members that will be playing support roles. The three projects that are now getting underway are 1705 Public Outreach, Grant Writing Technical Support, and Scoping Project for Pedestrian Pathway on Brookside Road. Aside from that, they also discussed potential grant subjects such as stormwater near the Common and whatever might come out of the 1705 study in terms of a phase 2, and the pedestrian path project overall. The PC was moving towards initiating a town plan update soon, hoping to update the plan in 2028 even though it was not due until 2029. The reason to push it forward was trying to push forward other growth areas in town aside from the Town Center. He noted the pedestrian path study is just a feasibility study and that the town has made no decisions yet on making a decision on such a project. There was discussion with 1705 and the pedestrian path there is opportunity to think about that linkage from the town center to the school as a community development/relationship, but this is still in early discussion. CCRPC is working to formalize the project kickoff language/contract with the town to invoke their work and those will be forthcoming. The Planning Commission will be taking a lead role in the 1705 outreach.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, was not present. P. Haller went over the road schedule from July 10, 2026 to July 23, 2026.

FY'26 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

FINAL UPDATE ON WESTFORD-MILTON ROAD & FINAL PAYMENT

Pike's representative had been away. Sean had some questions regarding the final payment and Pike told us to hold off until they run final numbers and adjust things. Work is done on the road, but our final number is likely to be lower.

TREASURER FY'26 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

There was no treasurer. MJ had shared the document with the Selectboard who went over it. The board discussed how they might handle the overage in the future and where that might be applied. Ultimately they decided that such warranted a larger discussion at a later date. Julia Andrews asked about the Summer Concert Series line item.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS

The Selectboard went over the Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants.

MYERS TOWN WIDE TRASH DISCUSSION

Joe Sinagra from Myers was present. P. Haller explained that the town has received a lot of complaints from residents on the inconsistent pickup times that have happened over the past month. Residents are wondering if there is a schedule change they should know about or what can be done to help residents know about when they should expect pickup. Joe noted that the driver that had done Westford's route for many years had moved on to another job. Myers has been training two new drivers to do the route. One of the changes is that in the past it was done with one truck. Until they can finalize the training it has been done with two trucks, one for trash and another with recycling. As our previous driver was comfortable with the route he'd done it as was comfortable to him, but the new driver is coming into town from the Fairfax side instead of the Essex side and is getting comfortable with the routine. P. Haller thanked Joe for his response time when communicated with. If they had another driver change he would like the town to know so that we can be pre-warned so we can best communicate with residents.

RECREATION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Bailey Greer and Greg Arendt from the Westford Recreation Committee (WRC) were present. They had some items they wanted to raise awareness of and make a request. There are three events every year the committee organizes and there is a coordinator with a stipend: Ice rink, 4th of July, and Turkey Trot. They are having a hard time retaining people that are willing to do this coordination work for the town. The \$500 is nominal and often requires a person reaching into their social circle and soliciting donations from the community. If we can't find people who are willing to help with coordinating these events it's very likely they will not reoccur. They are considering raising the fee that an event coordinator may earn for this, but out of the sense of community spirit they are concerned that individuals are not interested in doing this and this is a risk to the town.

B. Greer noted that it falls to the WRC if nobody steps up and they've had three different committee members step out citing Fourth of July burnout as part of their reason for stepping away. They are at a loss of where to look for volunteers but know these events are beloved by the town. The knowledge transfer when experienced organizers leave is not occurring. P. Haller noted that the board is beholden to their current budget that goes until June 30, 2027. If they wanted to budget more for the organizer fund they would need to do so during budget season. G. Arendt asked if there was a process for asking for additional funds out of cycle? They were doing so right now. The WRC only has three members remaining and are undecided on how to proceed and seeking advice on how to move forward. The Turkey Trot is currently the most critical because it is the chief revenue generating out of all the events. The inability to maintain continuative knowledge diminishes their efficiency in these areas.

J. Andrews felt this was a lot of problems becoming one larger problem. Historically the Rec Committee has been mostly a bunch of engaged parents. She wondered why the parents in town aren't engaging in the committee itself. The current committee are the most at risk for burnout next, the core volunteers are another. D. Jorschick thinks it sounds like time to put something in the newsletter for the community at large. They had already done so. She asked Tommy to speak to the amount of money we have squirreled away in the general fund of the

recreation department. T. O'Connor gave a brief rundown of their monies and budget. The things like the three different stipends, all the operational costs, equipment cost, money to support pump track, funds for running the turkey trot etc., Additional costs include the ice rink replacement and yearly costs that will eat into a good chunk of their money. They also reserve some money for replacing expensive things such as the soccer goals.

Clayton Wilburn was present. He wanted to speak to what was previously said. It probably already has been engaged parents, for example the previous owners of his house had completely maintained the ice rink in the past. He thinks what we're seeing is that the parents that can chip in are burnt through. Maybe we need to look for less traditional leadership in WRC if it wants to be continued, realizing that it's burnt folks out and they can try if their kids/life situation fits. P. Haller wondered if extra funds would prevent burnout. B. Greer thinks it might have other people in the community more enticed to step up, but even then she thinks they just need volunteers. G. Arendt noted they would like to maintain the tradition of volunteerism, but its increasingly difficult to attract these kinds of people. The stipend was built to try and find these kinds of people, but it wasn't a significant motivating factor.

P. Haller noted there were two years that we didn't have an ice rink and its loss was felt by the community. We got a volunteer to maintain it and got it back and it saw activity. Is that what we have to do to show the community the importance of these events? Such as not have Fourth of July? G. Arendt noted that Ada, the Rink Coordinator from the past year, was very passionate about the rink and did the work. She found it exhausting, but she finds it appreciated by the town and surrounding communities. She had to use a large network of friends and colleagues to set it up, take it down, and maintain it. If we get new rink boards she thinks she could do so again, but the WRC is also concerned that the experience of the past year was equal measure of enthusiasm and a future deterrent. It seems to J. Andrews that the folks she always sees on the rink are the Essex High School hockey team members and she's wondering if we could collaborate with the coaches there. This was already in the works.

G. Arendt noted the ice rink boards are beyond repair. He believes they are about 20 years old and that was a reasonable lifespan. They've priced out a \$5,000 replacement of the boards and to acquire paint and hardware sufficient to replace what we currently have. He would like to approach Center for Technology Essex and Essex High School and ask if they would like to build it under Ada's supervision as well as assembly in the fall. There are others out there that use it aside from the high schoolers and WRC thinks there's opportunity to reach out to the wider community. They believe if we don't get volunteers to build it they just might not build it. Ada thinks she could potentially get her colleagues and friends to build it, which is a massive task. WRC admires her ambition but doesn't think this is a reasonable expectation. In such event, WRC would return any funds meant for the rink back to the town. P. Haller clarified they are asking for \$5,000 to pay for the materials for the rink. That was true. D. Jorschick suggested a "buy a board" for advertising funding scheme could be a helpful way to get these unbudgeted funds. Dave Gauthier was present. He warned that Fairfax baseball had those banners out and the state made them take them down because they were considered billboards.

J. Andrews thinks the other thing we need to think about is that it does feel like WRC is sitting on a bunch of money and the board heard the very real uses for those funds, but it's all

ethereal at this point so it's hard to conceptualize how monies are used. The town does not have \$5,000 sitting in a bank account. She knows this is unpleasant information to receive but she wanted to be transparent. P. Haller noted the rink is something valued in the community and it is in the center of town and the Common Committee (CC) has a significant amount of money that has not been used and is gaining interest every year. Perhaps this would be a time to advise them to use some of those funds for the ice rink. B. Greer noted they had talked about it in a meeting. Back in 1994, Hendrick Kruse had donated to the town for improvements of the town common, noting he would love to see an ice rink there.

Lori Johnson was present. If the Recreation Committee wanted to send in a request to the Common Committee they were welcome to do so, but the CC funds are non-replenishing, it is a remainder from the one time donation. P. Haller understands this but countered that the town provides quite a bit of funding for the Common such as the Mowing, the portalet, the insurance, and the lighting and energy costs. He would like to see the Common Committee consider assisting the Recreation Committee with this venture. C. Wilburn noted that Rebecca Davanon had scoured the Town Minutes for how the rink came to be and they could not find anything concrete. He would not be against tossing in some funds as a donation for the rink.

There is also a steady and uninterrupted decline for coaching participation as adult leaders and they are broadly concerned they are not going to be able to maintain continuity. WRC is distressed; they feel the WRC and the Rink are important parts of the community. P. Haller thinks there's something going into the next newsletter. D. Jorschick and J. Andrews both offered suggestions for increasing volunteerism as well as ways to communicate these struggles to the community at large. J. Andrews thinks what she's seen regarding coaching is that sometimes parents feel they don't know enough to do it, but when you're coaching five year olds you don't need to know that much. P. Haller highlighted his appreciation for the WRC and asked them to come to the Selectboard more often with their concerns. He wanted to increase communication on these issues. Carol Winfield was present. She mentioned that the whole issue of volunteerism is a statewide and nationwide problem.

SPEED FEEDBACK SIGNS DATA

T. O'Connor had pulled data from the speed feedback times after a month of operation. He had pulled a random week as an example for the Selectboard. He noted that sometimes the number of vehicles can be artificially inflated if the sign reads a distant vehicle again when the vehicle comes closer. Cambridge speeds are a problem; there was one recorded going over 80 mph. Woods Hollow had a peak of 63 mph. P. Haller wondered if there was a way for a graphic to show the sheriff the speeds and when the high speeds are occurring rather than a timestamp. The software has a robust reporting system; we can dial down into the nitty-gritty and get a graph and send it over to the Sheriff.

L. Johnson had seen the one on Woods Hollow and was surprised to see it was 20 mph and she'd exceeded it on her bicycle. She thought it was curious that it was set to this since that 20 mph in that area is just an advisory safety speed for the curve in the road in that area, not the actual enforceable speed limit which is 35 mph.

UPDATE FROM ESSEX RESCUE

They are having trouble with a new truck and with staffing and they are trying to resolve both.

AFTER ACTION PLAN – TAX BILLS

There had been a struggle two weeks ago about getting the tax bills out because there had been an error that occurred in 1/3rd of the bills and Callie, MJ, and Maria worked hard to reprint and restuff almost 300 bills. T. O'Connor had spoken with New England Municipal Resource Center (NEMRC) about the issue and provided the board with an action plan going forward for NEMRC and the team. He highlighted that the continued work with NEMRC has shown that there's no one pinpoint-able thing that went wrong, but Chris from NEMRC had laid out a plan going forward. D. Jorschick suggested that we have a clear message on what the tax rate was after its set to the staff. P. Haller noted that we needed to not wait so last minute to set the tax rate itself. Part of why we've historically waited what the impact of the school taxes could be is to reflect on if we should adjust the municipal tax, but he doesn't think we need to wait until such a dire timeline. J. Andrews thought ultimately if the education rate comes in high, we can't adjust at that point because they have an approved budget they have to fund. When everything goes nice things come in at the right time and it makes sense to wait because there's a nice flow of information in a predictable way and that's not what happened this time.

JAPANESE KNOTWEED

The Westford Conservation Commission (WCC) had reached out regarding some invasive Japanese Knotweed that is becoming problematic in a few areas they suggest getting rid of, namely along 1705, the river, Misty Meadows trails. How do we plan to mitigate the knotweed from spreading? D. Jorschick spoke to this as she deals with it in a professional capacity. You cannot mow it; you cannot cut it. Whatever you do to it will encourage it to spread. There was a lot of work going on along Otter Creek. They are doing a process where they cut it down by hand and they are laying cages overtop to suppress it. What's happening now, people that are trying to sell property have to disclose that they have it on their property. The only thing that works is a pesticide/herbicide. In the last few years, it's gone crazy. It's hollow like bamboo and if you get it early enough it is edible. The more we can identify where it's popping up is super helpful, but we should leave it for now and talk more with the state about it in Deb's opinion. Kirsten Tyler from WCC had suggested using an invasive species specialists to remove a patch along the Misty Meadows, using WCC funds to cover the cost. J. Andrews wanted the board to make a motion to affirm and have Kirsten talk about a plan later. C. Wilburn was present. Unfortunately, he has Japanese knotweed on his property and it's along the property line with the Westford Historical Society. The newest shoot is close to their new septic mound and knotweed will wreck a septic mound. They're already talking with the state and a state certified injector for this type of weed work. They charge by how many trips and per application. Because it's an issue at his place, he's willing to share the cost for the injector. Max Tyler mentioned that he was in Cambridge on the LVRT and they have knotweed mitigation efforts going on over there. They might be a good point of contact. J. Andrews motioned to authorize the WCC to use their funds to work with an invasive species specialists to remove the knotweed patch along the school trails. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

SELECTBOARD RETREAT DATE OPTIONS

The board discussed potential dates for their retreat. They discussed August 8 as well as what subjects they might prioritize during the retreat.

UPDATES ON OPEN POSITIONS IN THE TOWN OFFICE

The nominating committee had nominated some treasurer candidates last week and the SB held interviews. They have put forward a candidate and offered the position. They are not completely done, the background check cleared this morning, and we are setting an onboarding date.

There was a matrix of delinquent tax collector (DTC) candidates, some of whom might want to do both DTC and treasurer. We still needed to offer this additional responsibility to the new treasurer, otherwise some other potentials were still on the table. J. Andrews thinks a next step is the committee to reach back out to people who might consider it to see if they will confirm or deny their interest or to repost it. P. Haller thinks they are currently reposting it.

Additionally, the Assessor, Teri Sabens, was leaving the position. Her last day is July 29th. The board needed to think of next steps. We already had one applicant with the same qualifications as Terri and has expressed starting on the 29th or close to it. Similar to our current assessor, they would be handling multiple towns. T. O'Connor noted next steps will be having an interview.

P. Haller had presumed we'd put out an advertisement for Town Planner and that the PC would have already been working on interviewing potential candidates. T. O'Connor noted that resumes have been delivered and Harmony had reached out to Ron Rodjenski for support. The PC, a SB member, Tommy, and Harmony would all be part of the interview. The board felt this was a good idea. J. Andrews volunteered to be the present SB member.

VOSHA SITE VISIT

Vermont League of Cities and Towns conducted an annual walkthrough in February. In discussion T. O'Connor noted that some actions we have to take immediately and others overtime. Lately a few other municipalities had a random visit from Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration and had significant fine for some small items. T. O'Connor had reached out to VOSHA; they have a program for municipalities and would provide an action plan. It's free of charge and while we're working through it and while we have deadlines VOSHA cannot do a random visit and fine us in the way other municipalities are occurring. The spaces will be the town garage and town office, and we'll have an action plan from there. P. Haller will be the attending SB member. He thanked Tommy for reaching out proactively.

EMERALD ASH BORER TRAINING ON JULY 31

The afternoon of Friday July 31st the task force for emerald ash borer in Westford, led by the Tree warden and Harmony will be training those to identify EAB.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondences from Rebecca Davanon that P. Haller had responded to regarding digging up Wild Parsnip.

Ben McElvaney regarding the Rec Committee's signage of the Common which was addressed last meeting. P. Haller had responded.

James Hazen regarding if the town might consider trail closures for trail that pass through private property like we did last year. P. Haller had responded and noted it will be on an upcoming meeting in August.

Will Dunkley and the WCC regarding the solicitation on the Town Common for 1705 information by the town on July 4th. Kim Guidry thanked Sean for the arrow signs.

COMMUNICATION

Recreation Volunteers, FPF post about Myers and remind people that Myers is not responsible for their large trash pickups.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

P. Haller motioned that premature public knowledge regarding legal would place the town at a significant disadvantage and enter executive session and invite Tommy O'Connor and Callie Hamdy at 8:38 pm. D. Jorschick seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

The board existed executive session at 9:11pm. J. Andrews informed the public that it came to light through the town attorney that the 2024 bond vote for the fire truck was not properly warned and we need to hold a re-vote on that bond. The board need to vote on the language tonight to get the bond on the ballot in November. Before it comes before the voters the board is going to come up with a communications plans so that voters feel properly prepared before voting. P. Haller motioned to put an article for bond on the back of the General Election ballot and that the bond language will read thusly: Shall general obligation bonds or notes of the Town of Westford in an amount not to exceed Four Hundred Seventy-Two Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$472.500), subject to reduction by funds from the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund, and having a maximum term of ten (10) years, be issued to fund the purchase and equipping of a fire tanker truck for the Westford Fire Department? J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 3-0. Julia and Tommy will meet regarding communications.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:15p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pat Haller
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Ben Bornstein
Dave Gauthier
Harmony Cism
Clayton Wilburn
Michael Miller
Bailey Greer

Lori JohnsonMax Tyler
Darryl Montague
Carol Winfield
Greg Arnt
Joe Sinagra
Kim Guidry