

SELECTBOARD MEETING
October 8, 2026
Draft Minutes

Present: Pat Haller
Julia Andrews
Nick Nichols
Deb Jorschick

Callie Hamdy
Tommy O'Conner
Abby O'Neil
Sean Cushing

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 Minutes from Special Informational Selectboard Meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Items Not on the Agenda

Carol Winfield was present. She wrote a letter to the Selectboard concerning the last meeting and had sent it too recently for the Selectboard to have seen it. She wanted it in the meeting packet for next meeting.

D. Jorschick was curious why Lenny Couture's banner was no longer hanging along the Common. T. O'Conner explained Lenny's first banner was on a test bracket using the metal wrapping around the pole vs what we now do, which is drilling into the pole. The bar that held the flag in place fell so he is re-drilling it so it will follow the drilled manner the others are put up with, so it is more secure.

MINUTES

J. Andrews motioned to approve the minutes from September 24, 2026 as amended. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

J. Andrews motioned to approve the minutes from September 29, 2026 as amended. N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein, CCRPC Representative, was present. Board of Governors meeting with the representatives of the different municipalities is on October 21. For Westford specifically one of the priorities is that the UPWP signup application process is open until the beginning of January 2027. There is considerable progress with respect to the 1705 feasibility project.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, was present and went over the road schedule from September 25, 2026 to October 8, 2026.

ACCESS PERMIT

Sean had already reviewed the access permit request on Cambridge Road. It is an undeveloped property with some conditional use approval for a driveway. N. Nichols moved to approve. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

ROAD FOREMAN TRUCK

S. Cushing was requesting permission to take the town pickup truck home during the winter so that he could check roads in a town vehicle before plowing instead of having to go to the shop first to get a town truck. This would save significant time in the road crew's response to snow accumulation. The truck would only be used for town business in this instance and never for personal business. Milton, Fairfax, Jericho Road Crews all do this, so it is not unusual. P. Haller couldn't think of a reason to say no to the request.

TREASURER FY'27 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

A. O'Neil, Treasurer, went over the FY'27 General Fund Budget Status Report.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS

The Selectboard went over the Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants.

ERRORS AND OMISSIONS REPORT

Mollie Mashtare, Assessor. This had started with the previous assessor. The two people listed had a dwelling that was removed but had not been removed in the grand list at the appropriate time so it is being done now. P. Haller moved to accept the Errors and Omissions, N. Nichols seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

Essex Rescue

Colleen Ballard from Essex Rescue (ER) was present to give the FY'28 Budget Request for ER. She gave a summary of the services that they provide. They are a regional service covering five different communities. Westford is 1% of their call volume. EMS is not recognized federally as a necessary service, so they do not receive government funding. All their funding comes from donations and subsidies. Their main goal is to keep themselves funding and available, so they are available when people call.

J. Andrews thanked Colleen for her work and the presentation. Something Westford has in common in ER is that we have to wrestle with our budget every year and our costs have already increased. Are there things Colleen thinks that can happen above the municipal level that can help support EMS infrastructure better, so they are not bearing so much? There is an advisory board the state put together to try and find some cost-saving solutions. They had also provided some funding for community para medicine. The hard part is even with ER doing those things there is no guaranteed funding. EMS was never meant to be funded the way it has to be now, but they also can't pull out as communities need the work they do. Colleen hopes the state will see how this affects whole communities and feels it is a statewide problem. N. Nichols asked Colleen to explain about what the subscription service was. It is a set fee \$65 paid towards ER that front loads some of their budget and offers some potential cost saving for those who may need transport. They have about 2,000 people who subscribe.

Barb Peck was present. She knows Westford has a Cancer Drive, maybe Westford needs to do an EMS Drive. She thought everybody gets sick and everybody has accidents. EMS response is incredibly important. Maybe we can have a fundraiser.

D. Jorschick thanked Colleen and expressed her appreciation for the service.

Westford Conservation Commission

Kirsten Tyler, from the Westford Conservation Commission (WCC), was present. She read the WCC budget proposal. Because much trail maintenance had paused while the Selectboard worked on the Maintenance Agreement with landowners, they expect that significant remedial maintenance work will be needed and are looking into the hiring of contractors to assist with that. They have also budgeted a second Japanese knotweed treatment. Volunteerism for trail maintenance has gone down in the last six years so they are unable to rely on volunteers as they have in the past. The proposed increase is only a result of invasive species removal and remedial trail maintenance. It does not reflect a permanent increase going forward. They have been generous in the past funding projects not in their scope such as the beaver deceivers.

N. Nichols mentioned the ANR grants for outdoor recreation. They are already looking at it. P. Haller noted his appreciation of WCC's efforts and work. There was a possibility during capital budget season looking at equipment needs. Joel Fay had been donating his time and tractor use for a long time. K. Tyler and many of the WCC thought they needed a tractor that was the towns. N. Nichols asked regarding the decline in volunteerism if that was a steady decline. It was, K. Tyler didn't know how to counteract that. They post about it, but it doesn't get traction. J. Andrews wondered if it made sense for the town to host a volunteer fair where the various groups in need of volunteers can have tables and individuals can learn the different things they can do in the community. The lack of volunteerism is a town wide and national problem, but Julia felt we could do better. P. Haller has heard that people appreciate the trails and he would like to see people volunteer that energy towards trail maintenance.

Winterfest

Kristin LeClair and Kirsten Tyler were present. They were the organizers of the Westford Farmers Market who were taking over Winterfest. They had already talked to the previous organizer, Carol Winfield. Last year the town gave \$750. The horse drawn trolley is a big piece of the budget, and they expect similar numbers going forward. K. LeClair clarified that this will not be February 2027's festival as that is already budgeted for, but for the festival for 2028.

Carol Winfield was present. She's excited that they're taking over the festival and she can't wait to see what occurs in February. She was grateful. This past February they'd had a significant donation from Westford Provisions, which closed on September 30th so that will be a reduction in expected donation.

Westford Farmer's Market

Kirsten Tyler and Kristin LeClair from the Westford Farmers Market were present. K. Tyler read the budget proposal. The previous budget support had been unexpected but appreciated, they are requesting continued support of \$250 which is level funded.

SET DECEMBER BUDGET WORKSHOP DATES

The Selectboard discussed budget workshop dates in hopes to schedule their budget workshops earlier than last year and to increase public accessibility to those meetings. They discussed December 10th and put forward December 12th as a potential weekend date. They also discussed a third meeting in January 12.

DISCUSSION ON PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ABANDONED DOG

In 2024 there had been a dog found abandoned that was taken in by a resident. The dog had a terminal illness. The Selectboard at the time had been asked to provide the euthanasia funds for the dog when the time came. At the time the board had wanted to provide this, but there had not been any motion made. The euthanasia service that the resident that had taken in the dog wanted was \$450. The dog is not currently in pain. Initially we had thought to take these funds from the Dog Warden ARPA request. Those funds are now in the general fund.

Barb Peck was present. She was offering to pay the euthanasia costs up to \$500. J. Andrews thought this was incredibly kind. Barb said it was the right thing to do. Every person or animal needs the right kind of death and there are vets that will come to the house like the service the resident had already settled on. P. Haller suggested for the comfort of people that we still motion to cover the costs as a backup. P. Haller motioned that absent the participation of Barb Peck donating the costs of the euthanasia that the Town of Westford reimburse the costs up to \$450. J. Andrews seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

Several emails regarding the trails, email about Kim Guidry about sound issues with those in the back of the room, EWSD newsletter.

COMMUNICATION

Communication on the October 26, statutorily required meeting on the Fire Truck Bond Re-Vote.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:16p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pat Haller
Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Gauthier
Dick Lavallee
Ben Bornstein
Colleen Ballard
Lori Johnson
Barb Peck
Max Tyler

Michael Miller
Carol Winfield
Dave Lavallee
Kristin LeClair
Dan Strobridge
Kirsten Tyler