

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD MEETING

Minutes

July 20th, 2026 – 5:00 p.m.

Westfield Town Office, 38 School Street

Meeting Recordings Available to View at <https://www.youtube.com/@TownofWestfieldVT>

Town Officials Present: Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair; Richard Degre, Selectboard; Dennis Vincent, Selectboard; Niki Dunn, Town Clerk; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Pat Sagui, Planning Commission Chair (Partial Attendance); Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner (Partial Attendance); Danny Young, Lister (Partial Attendance); Shelley Martin, Lister (Partial Attendance); Jenn Stelma, Library Board of Trustees (Partial Attendance); Karen Blais, Library Board of Trustees (Partial Attendance)

Others Present: Michael Miller (Via Zoom); Ted Sedell, Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (Via Zoom, Partial Attendance); Praneet Menon; Pierra Piuanno (Partial Attendance)

1. **Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 5PM.
2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** Praneet Menon was present and introduced himself. He is running for the State Representative seat for our district. He spoke at the end of the meeting about what led him to run for this position and some of his stances on finances and policy in Vermont.
3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** Added 10h – Cargill Salt Contract, 14f – Community Center Door Handle & 14g – Town Garage Septic Tank
4. **Approve Minutes: (emailed in advance)**
 - a. **Approve Minutes of the 6-15-26 Selectboard Meeting:**
 - b. **Approve Minutes of the 6-30-26 Selectboard Work Session:** Richard Degre motioned to approve the minutes from the June 15th and June 30th Selectboard meetings, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.
 - c. **June Selectboard Meeting To-Do List:** To-do list was reviewed.
5. **Correspondence: (emailed in advance)**
 - a. **Safety Hazard: Chronic Speeding on North Hill Road – Received from Pierra Piuanno on Monday, July 13th, 2026:** Pierra Piuanno discussed her concerns around speeding near her home. She noted that it is mostly box trucks and between the hours of 5AM to 8AM. She would be willing to have the Sheriff's Department park at her home but is also looking for other safety measures that may deter speeding. Temporary speed bumps were discussed as well as increasing or changing the signage. Later in the meeting Eric Kennison discussed the cons of installing temporary speed bumps. He feels they would need to be readjusted every day and would cause more of a hazard. The correct type of speed bump would need to be one permanently installed but then it would hinder plowing in the winter. It was agreed that the Sheriff's Department along with Jason Sevigny would be reached out to regarding additional safety measures that they feel would help without causing more of an issue. This will be discussed again at the August Selectboard meeting.
6. **Discussion Regarding Changes to the Zoning Bylaw – Pat Sagui, Planning Commission: (emailed in advance)** Pat Sagui noted that the Planning Commission decided to send a letter to Anthony Tanguay notifying him of the upcoming changes to the zoning bylaw that may affect his property. The Selectboard had no objection to the letter being sent to Mr. Tanguay.
 - a. **Anticipated Selectboard Hearing/Adoption Date – August Selectboard Meeting, August 17th, 2026:** The anticipated date for the public hearing to adopt the changes to the zoning bylaw would be August 17th, just before the regular Selectboard meeting.
7. **Listers Update – Danny Young & Shelley Martin, Listers:**
 - a. **FY26/27 Tax Rates – Education Tax Rate Homestead \$1.9436, Non-Homestead \$2.1241; Municipal Tax Rate Homestead and Non-Homestead \$1.1088; Veterans Exemption Tax Rate Homestead and Non-Homestead \$0.0062: (emailed in advance)** Danny Young explained the different rates being approved. He noted that the state sets the education tax rates, however it has

traditionally been included in this agenda item for approval. He also explained the veteran's exemption rate and that it covers the \$40,000 exemption on a veteran's assessed property value. The entire town makes up for that exemption amount by paying the veterans' exemption tax rate. Richard Degre motioned to approve the above tax rates as noted in this agenda, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed. Danny also noted that the homestead education tax rate went up a small amount this year, and in past years we have not been as lucky.

- b. **Errors & Omissions Report: (emailed in advance)** Danny explained the two errors on the Errors and Omissions form. The first is a property that years ago incorrectly merged two contiguous properties into one property, even though the parcels were not owned by the exact same owners. The change creates two separate parcels now instead of one larger parcel. The second change is a property that was purchased earlier this year and was a contiguous piece of land to the buyers already owned property, but it was not merged into one parcel at the time. The Selectboard and Town Clerk signed the report.
- c. **Discuss/Approve Penalty for Homestead Declaration Late Filers Requiring New Tax Bills (Previously 3%):** Danny explained that the town typically collects a 3% penalty on late HS-122 filers. This is the Homestead Declaration form. It was noted that some of the reasons people may be late filing is that they got an extension on filing their taxes, or didn't realize they needed to file one, or their tax preparer may have overlooked filing. Dennis Vincent motioned to approve collecting a 3% late filing penalty on Homestead Declarations, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.

8. Library Report – Jenn Stelma & Karen Blais, Library Trustees:

- a. **Approve/Sign Updated Memorandum of Understanding Between the Hitchcock Library Board of Trustees and the Selectboard: (emailed in advance)** The Memorandum of Understanding in its current form has been approved by both the Library Board of Trustees and the Selectboard. It now just needs to be signed by all parties.
- b. **Hitchcock Memorial Museum & Library Security Camera Policy: (emailed in advance)** The librarian created a draft policy for the security camera use and the Trustees wanted to share it with the Selectboard. Jacques questioned one section and what it meant as far as the recordings being stored in a secure place. Lisa noted that the cameras are not viewed on anyone's personal phones and the code to access the recordings is sent to the office cell phone which is kept in the locked cabinet in the vault and does not leave the office.
- c. **Discussion of Donating Items from Westfield Congregational Church:** Niki noted that there are a few items currently in the vault that the members of the Westfield Congregational Church had left hoping that they could eventually be donated to the library. Karen will pick up the items until the library has a spot for them. The Trustees are discussing what donations to take and how to handle them as well as the possibility of having rotating displays. The Trustees would like to have someone from the remaining members of the Westfield Congregational Church sign a release document for the donation.
- d. **Library Sign-In Sheet & Key List:** The key list for the library was updated and Jenn will look into which trustees have keys and which do not. It was discussed whether someone with a key needs to sign the sign-in sheet every time they enter the library.
- e. **Update on MERP Insulation/Siding Project:** Niki let everyone know that the library siding/insulation project was approved by VT Historical Preservation and the MERP Scope of Work was updated. The only bid received was from Jeff Dunn Building for \$45,000. The overage of funds not covered by the MERP grant will come from previous library investments. Niki also applied for some extra funding help with MERP Grant project overages and will update the boards if anything arises from that.

9. Treasurers Report – Lisa Deslandes:

- a. **Approve Warrants for June – 6/5/26 \$6,655.85 (bills) & \$8,159.72 (payroll), 6/15/26 \$61,284.70 (bills) & \$6,517.83 (payroll), 6/23/26 \$10,811.92 (bills), 6/29/26 \$12,792.57 (bills): (emailed in advance)** Richard Degre motioned to approve the warrants for June, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.
- b. **Review General Fund Budget Status Report: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed.
- c. **FY27 Hold Harmless Payment \$64,426 (FY26 was \$59,214):** Informational. This is the payment the town receives for land enrolled in current use.
- d. **FY27 PILOT Payment \$5,497 (FY26 was \$5,674):** Informational. This is the payment the town receives for state owned land and buildings.
- e. **Pay Rate for Niki Dunn as DRB Clerk:** When the board hired Niki to work as the DRB Clerk she was making less per hour than she does now, she questioned if she still is getting paid the old rate or if she gets paid her current rate when she does work as the DRB Clerk. The board agreed she

should be paid her current rate. Dennis Vincent motioned to approve paying Niki Dunn the same pay rate she gets as Town Clerk when she works as the Development Review Board Clerk, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.

10. Highway Update – Eric Kennison:

- a. **Update on Sign Installation (Hidden Drive Sign for Shantel Daigle, Reservoir Road, Etc.):** Eric has not installed these yet. Eric noted that a Kettle Farm Road sign needs to be ordered.
- b. **Update on School Street/Balground Road Culvert:** Eric was waiting for the property owner to move their wood; he will check to see if it has been done.
- c. **Upcoming Highway Grants: (emailed in advance)**
 - i. **Grants In Aid Pre-Construction Scoping Summary Due: (emailed in advance)** Eric was given the pre-construction scoping summary and will work with Jason Sevigny to get it completed.
 - ii. **Better Roads Grant FY26:** This grant has been awarded; we are still waiting on the grant agreement. The work needs to be finished by September 30th, 2027. The money for this grant match was not included in the budget for this year.
- d. **Review Highway Fund Budget Status Report: (emailed in advance)** Lisa noted that when accounting for the typical spending in November and December and ~~sand~~, there is around \$40,000 left for the summer roads and \$26,000 of that has ~~been~~ spent already.
- e. **Review/Approve Payment of Kennison & Son Excavating Invoices #4889, #4890 & #4891: (emailed in advance)** Jacques questioned the tree removal on one of the bills as the number of loads of debris removed would be more than one tree. Eric explained that they cleared out a bunch of trees on Balance Rock Road that had blown over and the road was washing out. Dennis Vincent motioned to approve the above invoices, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.
- f. **Request for “Children at Play” Sign at 848 Balance Rock Road:** Niki will get two of these signs ordered.
- g. **Discuss Balance Rock Road Culvert:** Ted Sedell and Eric worked to get the project approved for this year. Everything used needed to fit into the stipulations of the Buy America, Build America Act. They switched to using steel for the project and can move forward with it for this year. Eric noted the structure should be shipped on August 10th. Ted noted that he has tentative funding for the next culvert down on the brook.
 - i. **Re-Opening Taft Brook Road as Detour:** Once the dates for the work are set the emergency services will need to be notified of the road closure/change.
 - ii. **Easements for Properties in Work Zone:** There will be three temporary easements needed for the project. Niki would like to have Nick Daley draw these up. Dennis Vincent motioned to approve paying the town attorney to create three temporary easements, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.
- h. **Cargill Salt Contract:** The contract is for 100 tons at \$115.50 per ton. Eric noted that he doesn't use 100 tons but likes to have it available just in case. Richard Degre motioned to approve signing the Cargill Salt Contract for FY26/27, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.

11. MERP Grant Project Updates: (emailed in advance)

- a. **Open Library Insulation/Siding Project Bids:** There was only one bid, from Jeff Dunn Building for \$45,000. Dennis Vincent motioned to hire Jeff Dunn Building for the library siding/insulation project at a cost of \$45,000, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.
- b. **Update on Solar Project Start Date:** Sterling Mountain Solar can begin working on the solar project sooner than expected. They should be able to begin working on getting permits by next week.

12. Village Wastewater Study:

- a. **Potential Dates for August Final Report Meeting:** Niki has not heard back from Kevin Farrington at AES Northeast yet, so no dates were discussed.

13. Update on Delinquent Dog List: (emailed in advance) It was noted that the delinquent dog list only decreased by one person since last month. No tickets have been written by the Animal Control Officer at this point, and no update has been given. Niki recommended looking more into getting a first constable lined up so that they can handle writing these tickets so that this does not drag on. The new ordinance increases the fine to \$100 per offense for unregistered dogs and that should also help get people into compliance.

14. Facilities Updates:

- a. **Review VLCT Inspection Results: (emailed in advance)** Lisa discussed the remaining items on the VLCT Inspection report that need to be completed. There are tanks at the Town Garage that

need to be chained up and spaced farther apart, and the eyewash station needs to be inspected weekly. There is a chart that Eric will put at the eyewash station and he can inspect it and initial it weekly. There are a couple of small electrical things that need to be completed that she is having D&D Electric take care of.

- b. **Review/Approve Community Center Fire Alarm Quote from D&D Electric: (emailed in advance)** The quote was reviewed and it was decided to go ahead with getting this done. It may be necessary to use the unexpected funds to cover some of the maintenance costs this year. Dennis Vincent motioned to approve installing the fire alarm notification system at the Community Center for the cost of \$985, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.
- c. **Process to Remove Dead Trees in the Town Right of Way: (emailed in advance)** The trees that need to be removed on North Hill Road were discussed. Eric does not think many of them are actually in the town right of way. It was discussed to look into grant funding when it becomes available to get funds for the removal of some of these trees. Lisa questioned having a company that cuts trees do the removal.
- d. **FY27 Budget Consideration – Website Update for ADA Compatibility:** Niki let the Selectboard know about the change in law allowing websites that are not ADA compatible to be fined beginning in 2028. Her and LaDonna have been looking into various website companies to get quotes on building a new website next year to bring the Town into compatibility. This is something to think about when looking at the budget for next year.
- e. **Key List for Town Office, Community Center & Town Garage/Recycling Center:** Key list was updated with the keys the Selectboard members have.
- f. **Community Center Door Handle:** Richard will get a quote on the push bar door handle at the Community Center. The lock is not working correctly. Niki explained that she would like to have two key boxes at the Community Center with keys inside. One box would have a standing code available for all the town workers who regularly use the building and one key box for people who rent the building and that code can be changed periodically. Lisa would like to have the guest key box at the North Hill Road entrance. This would cut down on the cost of creating multiple new keys when the door lock is changed. This would also mean that a key would not need to be picked up from the Westfield General Store when the Community Center is rented, they can just get it from the key box instead.
- g. **Septic at Town Garage:** Dennis noted that air came out of the sink in the bathroom when he flushed the toilet. The board will look into it more before the next meeting to see if the tank needs to be pumped.

15. Land and Water Conservation Fund Self Inspection at Westfield Recreation Center – Due by August 31st, 2026:

- a. **Update on Playground Equipment Replacement Parts: (emailed in advance)** Niki explained that there are more broken parts than originally noted. She will go through the playground again and make sure she gets all the broken parts noted and get an updated quote from the company on the freight shipping charge. Doing a fundraiser for the playground updates was discussed. Using can money to go towards the playground and asking the Lions Club to donate the funds from one of their Texas Hold Em fundraisers next year were ideas brought up. Niki will get a sign made to put up at the Recycling Center noting that the bottle money will go towards the playground/recreation area. It was also discussed that the playground will most likely need mulch again next year.
- b. **Update on Recreational Area Signs: (emailed in advance)** Richard will pick these up this week and him and Lisa will get them installed. Once this is done Niki can get the self-inspection submitted.

16. Appointments to Various Offices:

- a. **First Constable:** Tabled until next meeting, no candidates.
- b. **Lister:** The person Richard spoke to about this position is not interested. Lisa Deslandes has been working with the listers and learning the job. She is willing to be appointed for now. Richard Degre motioned to appoint Lisa Deslandes to fill the remainder of the vacant lister term, which will be up for election in March 2027, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.
- c. **UMATR Wild & Scenic Committee Second Representative:** Jacques noted there may be someone from Alpine Haven who is interested in being on this committee. Niki will reach out to Lindsey Wight to see if she knows if the person would like to be appointed at the next Selectboard meeting.

17. Recycling Updates:

- a. **Schedule for August:**

August 1st – Jacques Couture
August 8th – Maurice Doyon/ Roger Tetreault
August 15th – Richard Degre
August 22nd – Dennis Vincent
August 29th – Dennis Vincent

- b. **Discussion on Can/Bottle Redemption:** This was discussed above regarding the playground fundraiser.

18. Executive Session (Anticipated):

- a. **Contracts:** Dennis Vincent motioned to enter executive session to discuss contracts, Richard Degre seconded.

Exited executive session with no action taken.

19. Other Business:

- a. **Reminder: Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District Meeting at Westfield Community Center on July 29th at 4PM to View Culverts on Taft Brook and Meet Afterwards:** Niki will remind the board about this meeting the day before.
- b. **Informational – ACT 162 Westfield Fire Warden: (emailed in advance)** Niki spoke with Bobby Jacobs regarding this change. He is aware that he is now the Fire Warden for Westfield and is keeping Jim Crawford on as the Deputy Fire Chief.
- c. **VT Community Leadership Summit – October 6th at Vermont State University, Castleton: (emailed in advance)** Jacques would like to attend this conference. Niki will email them to let them know.

- 20. Adjourn:** Dennis Vincent motioned to adjourn at 8:20PM, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: _____ **with** _____ **change(s)**

X

Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X

Richard Degre
Selectboard

X

Dennis Vincent
Selectboard