

Final Minutes

Town of Brookline Special Limited Agenda Selectboard Meeting

Saturday, October 18, 2025 at 9 AM

624 Grassy Brook Road

1. Call the Meeting to Order

Mike DeSocio called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM.

2. Introductions

The attendees introduced themselves. Including the 4 Selectboard (SB) Members and Town Moderator, 26 people attended the meeting. Attachment A lists the 26 attendees.

3. New Business

A. Motion to Apply for Better Roads Grant

M. DeSocio made a motion to have the Town apply for a Better Back Roads grant. Emily Beer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by the four Selectboard Members present (Mike DeSocio, Doug Wellman, Bruce Mello, and Emily Beer).

B. Motion to have Town Moderator (David Parker) Chair the meeting

M. DeSocio made a motion to turn over the chair for the rest of the meeting to the Town Moderator David Parker. D. Wellman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by the four SB Members present.

D. Parker explained that the purpose of the meeting was to seek input from the Town residents regarding the Town buildings due to the recent vacancy of the daycare Suzy's Little Peanuts (SLP) from the school building. The SB has no plans and is not presenting options for use of the Town buildings. The SB is seeking to gather information from Town residents regarding plans for future use of the buildings and wants to ensure that residents have an opportunity to express their ideas and ask questions.

B. Mello provided some background information about the buildings and offered to give a tour of the school building either at the end of the meeting or at another time. D. Wellman noted that the primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss the future of the school building given the departure of the daycare, and he clarified that the Town buildings include the school building, Brookline Meeting House (BMH), Town Office, the buildings at the Town shed, and the Historic Round School House.

C. Receive input on options for use of Town Buildings once Nursery School is vacated Questions and Comments

During the meeting, the following comments, questions, and recommendations were made regarding options for use of the Town buildings – primarily the school building and the Town office.

School Building at 624 Grassy Brook Road

The building is in fine operating condition. Improvements have been made to the building such as adding heat pumps which have significantly reduced the cost of heating and eliminated mold, and the water system has been upgraded.

The daycare's decision to move to Brattleboro was based on low enrollment at the daycare, staff turnover and the difficulty of finding people willing to travel to Brookline to work. The SB described some of the concessions offered to the daycare as well as changes made to the space that improved the building environment and significantly decreased their operating costs.

Rent from the daycare was providing \$20,000 in revenue which the Town has been able to use to fund other expenses. The cost to maintain the empty school is estimated to cost \$13,000 per year. The Town has access to the large room downstairs for Special SB Meetings and for the annual Town Meeting. Without the School building, the Town could always rent space – at the NewBrook Fire Department Station for example. The SB does not want to continue to be in the property rental business, but if the school building was rented, the rental income could be used to support a property management company. If the building was rented or sold, the revenue would support renovations to other Town buildings.

Significant issues to whether the Town can keep the school building and convert it to a Town Center housing the Town Office and other facilities include whether this Town of 550 people has the financial and human resources as well as community commitment and volunteer base to support the use and maintenance of the additional space.

Benefits of Renting the School Building or Space in the Building

- Rental income could be used to support other Town buildings.
- If a tenant was found, the rental income could support hiring a property management company.
- The space could be used for a number of activities. The space could be used by individuals who make things at home but need additional space. The three classrooms upstairs could support 3 businesses – 6 if people shared. The large room downstairs could continue to be used by the Town for meetings. The space could serve as a community center for scouts, music, dancing, rented out for events, artists could use space for studios.
- Renting the building would allow the Town the opportunity to use the building in some capacity in the future.
- Part of the building will be 100 years old in 2027 and if registered as an historic building would make the structure eligible for grants.

Disadvantages/Potential Issues with Renting the School Building Out

- The market for renting out commercial and office space is not favorable given the vacancy rate in Brattleboro.
- The SB does not want to continue to be in the position of property management. Although if a tenant was found, the rental income could support hiring a property management company.

Benefits of Selling the School Building

- Profits from the sale of the building could be used to support renovations to other Town buildings, particularly the Town Office, BMH, and Town shed.
- Selling the building would eliminate the need to maintain the building.
- The building could potentially provide multiple living units. In addition to housing this would provide tax revenue. There are organizations that buy buildings and convert them to housing – including affordable housing.

Disadvantages/Potential Issues with Selling the School Building

- Given the unfavorable market for sales of non-residential space, it could take a long time to sell the building.
- The BMH currently gets its water from the school well. Providing the BMH with continued access to water from the school well could be addressed in the sale contract for the school building.

Town Office at 734 Grassy Brook Road**Benefits of Selling the Town Office Building and Moving the Town Office to the School Building**

- Given the housing shortage, the Town Office is more marketable as a residential building than the school. Currently, the most desirable real estate in Southern Vermont is a small house. There are companies that purchase buildings to create affordable housing.
- If the Town Office was sold, the revenue would support renovations to other Town buildings.
- Moving the Town Office to the school building would focus the Town's operations in one location and provide a town center.
- The existing Town Office is not historic, but the front portion of the school is.

Disadvantages/Potential Issues with Selling the Town Office Building and Moving the Town Office to the School Building

- To sell the house as a residence, the Town will need to convert the building into a residence. Buyers prefer properties that are ready to move into rather than a property that requires significant renovations.

- The cost of moving the vault or building a new vault and moving its contents to the school building. *Note: while the Town is running out of space in the vault, the vault currently contains materials that do not need to be stored in the vault and could be stored elsewhere.*
- To sell the Town Office property, the Town may need to address the easement in the deed that currently provides access through the property to the property across the stream from the Town Office.
- The school building is 7,000+ square feet and the interior and exterior will need to be maintained by the Town. Maintenance and cleaning of the existing Town Office, a much smaller space, is already time-consuming.
- Current Town Office hours are limited to Tuesdays & Thursdays from 9 AM to 2 PM and the first Saturday of each month from 9 AM to 12 PM. While there is limited space in the Town Office, there are no full-time employees or Town officers that use the Town Office on a full-time basis. What staffing will be needed to support Town activities at the larger space.

Town Playing Field Adjacent to the School Building

There was a question about selling the playing field land adjacent to the school; however, the field is known to flood.

Town Salt & Sand Shed and Town Garage

Revenue from the sale of the Town Office or school or rental of the school building could support a new shed to protect stone and gravel from freezing together during the winter. E. Mark Bills has a very economical plan to build such a shed.

Recommendations and Actions Going Forward

- Undertake financial modeling of the building options – the operating costs and revenue. The modeling would provide information to assess the financial impact of various factors and assumptions on the options.
- Do an assessment/appraisal of the Town Office and school building. Then hire a realtor to evaluate the real estate market and the feasibility, cost, and proceeds of selling or renting the buildings.
- To the extent possible, confirm (for example, by asking for specific proposals for how people would use the space in the school building) that there is actual commitment from the residents and ability and intention about use of the space, to avoid creating a Town center in the school building only to find that the additional space is not used as planned. Are there people willing and able to step forward to keep the school building open and functioning? Is there real demand for the additional space?

- The options for the buildings should be presented for discussion at the next Town Meeting and once options are settled, then a Town vote should be scheduled via Australian ballot with the doors open from 7 AM to 7 PM.
- When the attendees were asked if it would be OK to spend money to assess the feasibility of the options, there wasn't a vote, but the group did concur. There are budget line items, such as the rainy-day fund, that could be used to fund expenses.
- Attendees recommended advertising the school building for rent. Costs of advertising commercial space through a realtor are \$5.00 per month and free through Zillow.
- Finally, the SB would like to continue to hear the public's comments. The best approach is to attend an SB meeting – in person or via Zoom. Comments from members of the public are heard early in the meeting.

4. Adjourn the Meeting

D. Parker moved to adjourn. E. Beer motioned to adjourn, M. DeSocio seconded, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was **adjourned at 10:38 AM**.

ATTACHMENT

List of Attendees

Members of the Selectboard
DeSocio, Mike
Wellman, Doug
Mello, Bruce
Beer, Emily
Town Moderator
Parker, David
Members of the Public
Ballou, Jonathan
Ballou, Vanessa
Bourne, Barbara
Carr, Fran
Carr, Tim
Fegley, Sally
Jillson, LeeAnn
Lavorgna, Gary
Lazzarini, Danny
Maggio, Dorothy
Mello, Pattie
Nau-Martoci, Laurie
Noga, Stanley
Noga, Pat
Parker, Lee Anne
Ray, Marjorie
Roach, Julie
Schmidt, Alyssa
Seidman, Andrew
Towler, Dan
Zucker, Leslie