

Final Minutes

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, January 7, 2026, 6:30 PM

Present:

Selectboard (SB):

Mike DeSocio (MD) Chair
Doug Wellman (DW) Vice-Chair
Bruce Mello (BM)
Emily Beer (EB)
E. Mark Bills (EMB)

*Via Zoom

Town Officers:

Vanessa Ballou (VB) Recording Clerk
Melissa Brown (MB) Treasurer*

Public:

FactTV*
Alyssa Schmidt (AS)
Kerry Bourne (KB)
Dan Towler (DT)

1. Mike DeSocio called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

MB joined the meeting at 6:49 PM for the discussion of the 2027 budget and left afterwards.

2. Changes to Agenda

MD made a motion to reverse the discussion of section 6 and 7. DW seconded. The motion passed unanimously. MD reported that Stan Noga has expressed concern about the Executive Sessions. MD motioned to remove the Executive Session from the agenda. EB seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Review Draft Minutes

A. Regular Agenda Meeting December 17, 2025

MD made a motion to accept the minutes for the December 17, 2025 SB Meeting. DW seconded. The motion passed unanimously by the 4 SB members (MD, BM, EB, EMB) present at the December 17th meeting with DW abstaining.

4. Members of the Public

A. Scheduled Members of the Public

1) Alyssa Schmidt – Vacation Policy

AS asked whether the HR Policy would have a section covering vacation time. Dan Towler asked whether vacation time increased by duration of employment. The SB confirmed that vacation leave will be covered and explained that the goal of the initial policy is to document what the Town is currently doing. Discussions about what to change, such as increased vacation time based on years of work, will need to follow. Town vacation benefits are complicated by elected vs appointed positions and other topics related to vacation accrual and payment such as whether it would be paid out when a person leaves.

2) Kerry Bourne – Brookline Meetinghouse (BMH)

KB was in attendance to talk about the BMH and the plan which he described as misguided and ill-conceived with unrealistic timelines that also destroy unique historic features. He repeated concerns he voiced during the SB Meetings he attended on November 5 and December 3, 2025 regarding the recent painting and window

reconditioning in the Annex and the plans for insulating the Annex. He asked the SB to table all upcoming plans for the BMH, including the planned insulation. He listed other repairs that were more pressing such as the ridge cap, elimination of sources of moisture, replacement of slate roof tiles, addressing storm windows in the brick building, etc. KB volunteered to work on rebuilding the porch roof. He suggested removing the responsibility of the BMH from the Building Commissioner and that the funds available for Town buildings could be used to make improvements in the Town's Shed. He asked the SB to consider what he is saying; his next steps will be to start talking with people at the state level.

MD informed KB that a representative from Farnum will be coming to address questions about the insulation. MD commented that someone on the SB would need to make a motion to halt the insulation so that the SB could vote, but this could not occur during this meeting.

B. Unscheduled Members of the Public

Dan Towler recommended that before any additional work is done on the BMH, the Town needs to decide what to do with all the Town's buildings. If the School building becomes the Town's community center, it may not make sense to insulate the BMH for year-round use.

MD clarified that funding for the BMH is from donations and grants, not tax dollars. MD agreed that a building plan is needed for the Town.

5. Warrants

A. Payroll

MD made a motion to approve payroll warrant 2625 for \$2,248.62. EB seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Accounts Payable

MD made a motion to approve payables warrant 2626 in the amount of \$23,022.23. DW seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Old Business

A. HR Policy

EB summarized the outstanding questions to be addressed before the next draft of the HR Policy can be prepared. For example, determining who is eligible for vacation benefits (elected vs appointed, full-time vs part-time), how it will be accrued and whether it rolls-over into the next year? DW motioned to table. MD seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Purchase Policy

BM summarized the purchase limits for incidental, regular, and major in the current Purchase Policy and the changes he is recommending based on his conversations with VLCT (Vermont League of Cities and Towns). The SB agreed to increasing the upper limit of incidental purchases to less than \$2,500.

<u>Expense Category</u>	<u>Current Purchase Policy</u>	<u>Proposed Revisions</u>
Incidental	Less than \$1,000	Less than \$2,500
Regular	\$1,000 but less than \$7,500	\$2,500 but less than \$7,500
Major	\$7,500 or more	\$7,500 or more

BM made a motion to raise the upper limit for incidental expenses from \$1,000 to less than \$2,500 and to change the limit for regular purchases to \$2,500 to less than \$7,500, with no change to the major purchases. DW seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Meeting House Priorities Review

This was covered with BM's update – see 8.B. below.

7. New Business

A. 2027 Budget- and General Fund Adjustments

MD presented the final draft budgets for the general fund and the highway fund and highlighted changes that reduced the budgets. The final draft budgets project an increase of 4% in both the general fund and highway fund.

B. 2025 Annual Report Production Review/Update

1) Review Timeline, Draft Articles, etc.

MD reviewed the timeline for the production of the Brookline Annual Report and reviewed the Articles with the SB.

2) Proposed Article to Fund Analysis of Building Planning

Among the articles is a request to authorize up to \$15,000 for the development of a plan identifying options and associated costs for the Town buildings (Town Office, BMH, and vacated school building).

C. Contract for Re-appraisal from NERMC

The SB discussed getting input from the Listers and whether the Town would need to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) first rather than move forward with signing the contract with NERMC. MD motioned to table. EB seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Reports and Updates

A. Emily Beer

None.

B. Building Commissioner – Bruce Mello

1) Town Buildings Update

BM reported that in the school building the internet has been installed and the phone is in but still needs to be hooked up to the fire alarm. Internet access still needs to be provided to the BMH. The Town Office and Round Schoolhouse have been cleaned.

2) BMH

Responding to comments made by KB earlier in the meeting, BM stated that there are not numerous problems with the Schoolhouse, that he would like to arrange to have Farnum Insulation come to the first SB Meeting in February to explain their process for insulating, that KB is right about the ridge cap needing work, and that some of the slate tiles need to be replaced, but that the old Annex porch roof was a mess. Regarding KB's comments about the storm windows, BM is looking into using the remainder of the MERP (Municipal Energy Resilience Program) grant to purchase storm windows for the Annex. BM repeated that he has received SB approval for all BMH projects and is working with Vermont Historic Preservation.

Since DW was not in attendance at the previous SB Meeting, BM summarized the BMH Annex plans that he presented on December 17, 2025.

C. Highway Supervisor – E. Mark Bills

EMB reported that salt and road sand was replenished and the custom-built bucket for the excavator was delivered. He has been working on general road maintenance, cutting down road-side trees, and paperwork related to the highway budget and design for the shed.

D. Doug Wellman

None.

E. Mike DeSocio

MD plans to present an update of the budget for the past 6 months at the next meeting.

9. Communications

There were communications from Alyssa Schmidt regarding vacation time for Town employees (see 4.A. above) and Gary Lavorgna regarding contributions to Newbrook Fire Department.

10. Executive Session

The SB discussed requirements and the process for going into Executive Session but did not go into an Executive Session.

11. Set Agenda

A. Regular Meeting January 21, 2026

- 1) Minutes January 7, 2026
- 2) Finalize Articles for Town Meeting Warning
- 3) HR Policy
- 4) Purchase Policy to be signed
- 5) Financials for July to December 2025
- 6) Other

B. Future Meetings

- 1) Farnum Insulators – February 4, 2026
- 2) Listers regarding contract with NERMC
- 3) Review of the Planning Commission Town Plan

12. Other Discussion Not Requiring Action

A Town Meeting will be held to review the updated Town Plan.

13. Adjourn the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Vanessa Ballou, Recording Clerk