

Final Minutes

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 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*
Dan Towler (DT)*

1. Mike DeSocio called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

MB joined the meeting at 7:06 PM for the discussion of the budgets and left afterwards.

2. Changes to Agenda

MD motioned to add discussion of an IT contract to under New Business as item 7. C.

EB seconded. The motion passed unanimously by the 4 SB Members present (MD, DW, EB, EMB).

3. Review Draft Minutes

A. Regular Agenda Meeting January 7, 2026

MD made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted for the January 7, 2026 SB Meeting.

BM seconded. The motion passed unanimously by all 5 SB Members.

4. Members of the Public

A. Scheduled Members of the Public

None.

B. Unscheduled Members of the Public

None.

5. Warrants

A. Payroll

MD made a motion to approve payroll warrant 2627 for \$1,863.47. DW seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Accounts Payable

MD made a motion to approve payables warrant 2628 in the amount of \$31,824.67. EB seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Old Business

A. Planning for March 2, 2026 Annual Town Meeting Review of Planning Timeline

MD reminded the SB of the critical items in the Town Meeting timeline, including:

- Warning to be posted at 3 Town sites between January 22nd and February 2nd.
- SB approval of the Annual Town Report during SB Meeting on February 4.

B. Final Warning - March 2, 2026 Town Meeting

MD read the warning for the 2026 Brookline Town Meeting.

Warning for 2026 Brookline Town Meeting

The legal voters of the town of Brookline are hereby warned to meet in the multipurpose room of the former Brookline School Building in said Town of Brookline on Monday the 2nd of March 2026 at 6:00 PM to transact the following business from the floor:

- Article 1 To elect a Town Moderator for a term of 1 year;
- Article 2 To elect all other Town Officers required by law:
- A. Town Clerk for a term of 1 year
 - B. Select Board Member for a term of 3 years
 - C. Select Board Member for a term of 3 years (2 years remaining)
 - D. Select Board Member for a term of 2 years
 - E. Lister for a term of 3 years
 - F. Lister for a term of 2 years
 - G. Lister for a term of 1 year
 - H. Auditor for a term of 3 years
- Article 3 Shall the voters accept the Auditors' Report?
- Article 4 Shall the voters authorize the collection of taxes in 4 installments, with the due dates being: August 11, 2026; November 10, 2026; February 9, 2027; May 11, 2027?
- Article 5 Shall the voters have its current taxes collected by its Town Treasurer?
- Article 6 Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures of \$221,948 of which \$163,296 shall be raised by taxes and \$29,799 by non-tax revenues, and \$28,853 by 2025 General Fund surplus?
- Article 7 Shall the voters authorize Highway Fund expenditures of \$438,031, of which \$287,831 shall be raised by taxes and \$115,200 by non-tax revenues and \$35,000 by application of 2025 Highway Fund Surplus?
- Article 8 Shall the voters authorize Highway Fund expenditures of \$25,000 to be raised by taxes as a portion of the Town's 20% funding requirement for a \$200,000 State Grant?
- Article 9 Shall the voters authorize School Building Fund expenditures of \$15,000 of which \$11,260 will be raised by taxes and \$3,740 by the 2025 School Building Fund Surplus?
- Article 10 Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures of \$15,000 to be raised by taxes for the development of a Town Plan for Buildings?
- Article 11 Shall the voters authorize the Town to appropriate to the Re-appraisal Fund \$10,000 to be raised by taxes?
- Article 12 Shall the voters authorize Community Fund expenditures of \$1,000 to be raised by taxes?

Article 13 Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures of \$11,202 to be raised by taxes for the following organizations:

	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Groundworks Collaborative	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300
Womans Freedom Center	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500
Vt Ctr Independent Living	\$ 80	\$ 80	\$ 80
Youth Services	\$ 255	\$ 255	\$ 255
Valley Cares Inc	\$ 821	\$ 821	\$ 821
American Red Cross	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
Historical Soc. of Windha	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
Grace Cottage Foundation	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 750
Senior Solutions	\$ 710	\$ 710	\$ 760
SEVCA	\$ 465	\$ 465	\$ 465
Rural Fire Protection Prg	\$ 100	\$ 200	\$ 200
Green Up Vermont	\$ 50	\$ 50	\$ 50
The Current -CT River Tra	\$ 125	\$ 175	\$ 175
West River Valley Thrives	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500
Windham County Humane Soc	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
VABVI	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ 100
SeVEDS	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 1,596
Vermont Family Network	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
Moore Free Library	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,100
Winston Prouty Ctr	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300
The Gathering Place	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
Newbrook PTO	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
Newfane Anew	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Social Total	\$ 7,656	\$ 9,806	\$ 11,202

Article 14 "Other Business" discussion, which shall not be used for taking binding municipal action, and the Moderator shall so rule.

DW made a motion to approve the warning as read. BM seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MD also reviewed the Town's estimated tax rates which will be presented in the Town Annual Report for the 2026/2027 fiscal year. The total increase across the General Fund, Highway Fund, and Special Articles is \$69,967. MD explained where costs have increased and which of these costs represent a one-time cost such as Articles 8 and 10. These one-time costs account for more than half of the increase.

C. HR Policy

EB presented the final draft of the HR Policy based on input from VLCT (Vermont League of Cities and Towns), the SB, and Town employees. She explained that the policy presented the Town's current practice with the addition of policies that the Town did not have. And she added a section on vacation accrual and payout. The SB suggested additional changes.

EB moved that the SB approve the draft Brookline Personnel Policy that she circulated today with the addition of the language about unused vacation time and other changes. DW seconded. During the discussion, DW commented that the existing sick leave policy previously approved by the SB should be rescinded and proposed amending the original motion.

DW motioned to rescind the current sick leave policy. BM seconded. The amendment to the original motion passed unanimously.

MD called for a vote of the original motion. The original motion passed unanimously.

D. Purchase Policy Signing

BM explained that he wanted to revisit changing the spend levels for incidental and regular expenses to \$5,000 based on his experience with the Town's buildings. The Purchase Policy to be discussed at the next meeting.

7. New Business

A. Review December YTD Financial performance

MD and MB reviewed the year-to-date financials for the General Fund and Highway Fund. Overall the General Fund financials are okay. While the Town tax revenue to date continues to benefit from property owners who paid the entire year up front, total tax revenue for the year could be at risk because of delinquent payments. MB continues to follow up regarding delinquent taxes and will start sending them to the attorney for further follow-up. The Highway Fund is positive because of FEMA and other grant payments. MD highlighted areas where spending is over the projected amount for the time period. EMB, DW, and MB will work together to monitor on-going expenses.

B. Ellen Ware RFP (Request for Proposal)

Stan Noga has reviewed the initial draft of the RFP prepared by Hammond Engineering. The SB discussed the process for finalizing and advertising the RFP for the Ellen Ware Road culvert, including whether and how Archie Clark, Brookline Road Commissioner, could assist EMB with technical details of the RFP given that A.S. Clark & Sons may bid on the project. Everett Hammond has offered to attend the pre-bid meeting as well as the SB Meeting when bids will be opened. EMB advised that the RFP should be sent out soon given that contractors get work lined up by Spring.

Historic Stone Arch Bridge/Culvert 11

MD informed the SB that he has not yet found a stone engineer but has new information from FEMA about the need for an engineering study for the Stone Arch Bridge. An engineering study is not needed if the stone arch is only repaired or only repaired with a certain amount of mitigation; this could include installing a rubber membrane to deflect water from eroding the structure. An engineering study is needed if in addition to repairs, a greater level of mitigation is undertaken. This greater level of mitigation would include if the mitigation cost is greater than the repair cost.

The FEMA representative advised the Town to request an extension if an engineering plan is needed. Otherwise, it's not clear that the Town would be granted an extension. EMB informed the SB that Scott Jensen of ANR (Agency of Natural Resources) sent him a letter via email that he will grant a stream permit to do the repairs to the Stone Arch Bridge. EMB informed the SB that he confirmed with FEMA that the Town could use funds from another grant such as the Vermont Parks Grant to pay the Town's portion of the FEMA grant.

MD, EMB, and MB have another call with the FEMA representative scheduled for Friday, January 23rd.

C. IT Contract

The Town Clerk, Marjorie Ray, has identified a provider of IT support with an hourly rate of \$100 and who is recommended and has worked for neighboring towns. The SB decided to move forward with a contract to be addressed at the next meeting.

8. Reports and Updates

A. Emily Beer

After distributing copies of the state regulations regarding executive sessions, EB highlighted specific sections for the SB, and the group discussed procedural details.

B. Building Commissioner – Bruce Mello

- 1) BM confirmed that Farnum Insulators are scheduled to attend the February 4, 2026 SB Meeting so that the SB and the public can hear about the insulating plans and will have an opportunity to ask questions. Dan Towler informed BM that Kerry Bourne will not be able to attend the meeting. BM asked if KB could attend by Zoom. DT to follow-up.
- 2) BM provided Barbara Bourne and Erin Zargo with a tour of the School building; they are interested in the possibility of doing another daycare in the building.

C. Highway Supervisor – E. Mark Bills

1) Certificate of Highway Mileage

EMB explained that the SB needs to sign the Certificate of Highway Mileage which is used by the state to determine the Town's share of state aid for its highways for the fiscal year 2027. There have been no changes in the Town's mileage since last year. EMB read the road mileage and circulated the document for SB signature. The form must be submitted by February 20, 2026.

Certificate of Highway Mileage Year Ending February 10, 2026	
<u>Type</u>	<u>Mileage</u>
Class 1	0.000
Class 2	4.950
Class 3	11.91
<u>Highway</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Total	16.860
Class 4	1.47

Meghan Brunk from VTrans (Vermont Agency of Transportation) will contact the Town regarding the level of funding to be provided.

2) Paving Grant

The Town needs to work on an RFP for the paving grant. Meghan Brunk can provide a generic RFP for the Town to use. EMB will prepare a draft for the SB to review at the February 4th or no later than the February 18th meeting.

3) Structure Grant

Brookline is due to be awarded a structure grant in the Spring of 2026. The structure grant consists of an initial phase requiring an engineering plan with the work to be completed by the end of the second year of the grant. The engineering work will determine what kind of structure is needed: large culvert, box culvert, or a bridge. The location is on Grassy Brook Road where the floor of the existing culvert has completely rusted through.

4) Other

EMB is working on cutting trees to enhance visibility, is continuing work on the salt shed design, and is working on an order for signs. He has sent his highway report on for the Town's Annual Report. Another load of salt will be delivered.

D. Doug Wellman

None.

E. Mike DeSocio

None.

9. Communications

Dan Towler sent a letter which he will present at a future SB Meeting to be read into the minutes.

10. Executive Session

EB stated that she heard of a personnel issue that the SB should be aware of; EB moved to enter Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee. EB acknowledged that there may be another reason to move into Executive Session, and if so approved, the SB would do that after the result of the next motion. DW seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DW made a motion to enter Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(5) a clear and imminent peril to the public safety that relates to the safety and security of Town elected officers. BM seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The SB entered into the executive session at 8:45 PM, FactTV recording was turned off, and VB was excused from the SB meeting.

EB motioned to exit the executive session; MD seconded. No actions, motions, or votes took place during the executive session.

11. Set Agenda

A. Regular Meeting February 4, 2026

- 1) Minutes January 21, 2026
- 2) Farnum Insulators
- 3) Dan Towler's Letter
- 4) Review of Town Annual Report
- 5) Purchase Policy
- 6) IT Contract
- 7) Plans for Town Shed

- 8) RFP for Paving
- 9) RFP for Ellen Ware Road culvert
- 10) Other
- B. Future Meetings
 - 1) Listers regarding contract with NERMC
 - 2) Review of the Planning Commission Town Plan (after Town Meeting)

12. Other Discussion Not Requiring Action

DW suggested that the Town invite the state representatives to the Town meeting. Following a brief discussion, DW volunteered to invite them.

EB provided the revised HR Policy for the SB Members to sign.

13. Adjourn the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Vanessa Ballou, Recording Clerk