

Draft Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, August 19, 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*
Michael Miller (MM)*
Dan Towler (DT)*

1. Mike DeSocio called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM and introduced all attendees.

2. Changes to Agenda

MD **motioned** to add a recycling discussion as the first item under New Business. EB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

3. Review Draft Minutes

A. Regular Agenda Meeting – August 5, 2026

MD made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the Regular SB Meeting on August 5, 2026 with the edit on page 2. EMB seconded. The motion **passed** with 4 of the 5 voting in favor and DW abstaining.

4. Members of the Public

A. Scheduled Member of the Public-5 min

None.

B. Unscheduled Members of the Public- 2 Min

Dan Towler expressed concern about the recent pile of trash dumped at the Town recycling container. He noted that it had been cleaned up but stated that it shouldn't be the job of the Highway Supervisor, Mark Bills, who has enough to do without getting stuck cleaning up illegally dumped trash. DT questioned whether the town has an ordinance addressing dumping or littering and, if so, how it could be enforced. He is troubled by the lack of accountability for people who leave trash at the site and recommended that the Town put up signs saying "\$500 fine for littering".

5. Warrants

A. Payroll

MD made a **motion** to approve payroll warrant 2706 in the amount of \$7,642.82. EB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

B. Accounts Payable

MD made a **motion** to approve Town payable warrant 2707 in the amount of \$5,066.61. BM seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

6. Old Business

A. Building Use Workgroup

The SB discussed the information session held by the Building Use Workgroup and moderated by David Parker on August 18, 2026. The meeting represented a productive exchange between the community and the Workgroup who did a great job answering questions. Among the public's suggestions was the recommendation that if additional time is needed for research and public discussion, the Workgroup not rush to complete the process to meet the November 2nd deadline for having the residents vote on options for the Town Office and vacant School building.

The SB discussed whether a third informational meeting should be scheduled for October 6th. EB reviewed guidance from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) regarding how options can be presented to voters. Options posed to voters should be yes or no questions rather than complex, multi-part questions that are more likely to be confusing. The SB discussed using the results of a nonbinding community poll or survey as the basis for further defining the path forward and potentially defining yes or no questions for the voters. The sale of municipal property must be presented to the voters. The SB acknowledged that complete information will not be available before a decision is made. Actual sale prices, future tenants, grant opportunities, and building costs will be estimates based on reasonable assumptions until the Town chooses a direction and begins to pursue it.

MD presented modeling of estimated costs and associated assumptions for the four scenarios under consideration. Keeping the Town Office as is and maintaining the vacant School House is the most expensive option for the Town, while selling the School House is the least expensive option for the Town. The figures will continue to be revised as new information becomes available. The modeling process is based on conservative assumptions so that the Town does not underestimate potential costs but serves to provide information to compare the general direction of the different scenarios and not to predict the exact future for the various scenarios.

B. Town Yard Update

Stan Noga has provided EMB with information about the boundaries around the Town Yard.

C. Town Lister Update

A vacancy notice for the lister position has been posted and the SB is assessing the interest of a potential lister. EB **motioned** to raise Helen Holt's rate to the Chair rate. EBM seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

D. Line of Credit

The SB discussed the expected timing of the final invoices for the Hill Road and Ellen Ware Road projects and the expected start of the paving project and concluded that the line of credit will be needed sooner. They would also like to have a legal review of the line of credit language. MD made a **motion** for the SB to sign the Line of Credit Agreement with the provision that the SB will seek legal review as soon as possible. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

E. Hill Road/Ellen Ware Update

1) Hill Road – Historic Stone Arch Bridge

The work remaining includes paving, installing new guard rails, and final site clean-up. The SB discussed celebrating the reopening of the road.

2) Ellen Ware Road

Work on replacing the culvert near the town line between Brookline and Townshend on Ellen Ware Road started this week. The work is expected to take approximately 3 weeks from August 22, 2026. The road is closed to thru traffic.

3) FEMA Update – Hill Road Advance Payment

FEMA has informed the SB that they are 4 weeks behind schedule in approving the advance payment. Once approved, payment will take another 4 weeks. It appears that the Town will receive the advance payment after the work has been completed. The FEMA representative also said that they would reimburse the Town for any interest paid because of their delay in approval and payment.

F. Cemetery Discussion

In addition to the Riverside Cemetery, which is an active cemetery and is overseen by the Cemetery Commission, the Town has 6 ancient cemeteries. The Town budget includes funds for basic maintenance such as mowing and removing fallen branches for the ancient cemeteries, but no funds to address graves with fallen or leaning gravestones or overgrown by trees or weeds. Some of the gravestones are difficult to read because of weathering. The ancient cemeteries could use more oversight. DW will follow-up with the Cemetery Commission about adding these ancient cemeteries to their domain.

7. New Business

A. Recycling (*added to agenda at beginning of meeting*)

A resident was observed putting a metal bed frame into the Town recycling bin. MD will follow-up with the resident regarding how the Town's recycling works and services available at Windham Solid Waste. Separately, other items were left including aluminum doors, trash, and plastic bins. The SB discussed creating an ordinance covering the entire Town that will authorize the Town to fine people who litter. EB and DW agreed to draft an ordinance.

B. Emergency repair of bridge on Grassy Brook Road

EMB does not have an update from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), but he is continuing to work on getting a potential emergency grant.

C. Property Tax Sale

The SB and the Treasurer discussed the situation concerning a property owner who has been behind on their property taxes since the 2023/24 fiscal year, entered into a payment plan offered by the Town, and still has a significant outstanding balance. The Town sent a breach of contract letter with details concerning the outstanding amount and a request to respond in 30 days. DW made a **motion** to proceed to a tax sale. MD seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

D. Policy for Town Buildings/Assets Use

The SB discussed creating a policy for the use of Town Buildings and other Town assets such as tables and chairs by the residents. While the original intent was to create a policy specific to the Brookline Meeting House (BMH) which Jon Ballou has volunteered to draft; the SB decided that the policy should apply to all the Town Buildings and assets with the Town Clerk (Marjorie Ray) drafting the section related to the Town Office and the Highway Supervisor (EMB) drafting the section related to the Town Garage. The existing Brookline Town Office Use Policy can be superseded by the new policy.

E. Request for SB Support of Ellen Ware Property Grant

The SB has received a request from Andrew Toepfer of Bull Creek Common Lands a 501(c)(3) organization based in Athens to talk to the SB on October 7, 2026. The organization is applying for a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to purchase 315 acres of undeveloped land along Ellen Ware Road in Brookline and Townshend. After the land is purchased, a conservation easement and a public easement will be placed on the lands so the land will remain undeveloped and open to public access, recreation, hunting, and fishing in perpetuity. They would like the Town to endorse their application for the grant. The current owners of the land (THE DUDE LLC) are placing a conservation agent on the property with the Vermont River Conservancy, but this easement might not necessarily include the same public access. The SB discussed the potential tax implications.

8. Reports and Updates

A. Building Commissioner – Bruce Mello

BM initiated a conversation with Kerry Bourne and plans to continue the discussion with him regarding the insulation grant awarded for the BMH. MD reminded BM that all work on the Town's buildings is halted while the Town considers what to do with all the buildings.

B. Emily Beer

EB provided an update to the SB regarding the following.

1) Board of Civil Authority (BCA)

A BCA meeting is scheduled for August 20th at 6 PM. EB would like to have at least 5 BCA members present. Helen Holt will also attend. EB has distributed the VLTC training videos and asked the BCA members to watch them.

2) Tax Abatement Request

The resident who requested a Tax Abatement has cancelled the request.

3) Regional Policing

Ten towns signed up for the regional policing program.

C. Highway Supervisor – E. Mark Bills

Updates on Hill and Ellen Ware Roads provided earlier in the meeting. EMB is working on regular road maintenance.

D. Doug Wellman

No update.

E. Mike DeSocio

No update.

9. Communications

The SB received communications from the Vermont Rural Fire Protection regarding grants that are available for \$10,000 and an email regarding questions about Fire Wardens.

10. Set Agenda

A. Regular Meeting September 2, 2026

- 1) Minutes from August 19, 2026 Regular SB Meeting
- 2) Emergency grant for repair of bridge on Grassy Brook Road
- 3) Ordinance for Recycling Bin
- 4) Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets
- 5) Town Lister Update
- 6) Hill Road and Ellen Ware Road Update

- 7) RFP for Plowing and Sanding
- 8) Other

11. Other Discussion Not Requiring Action

None.

12. Adjourn the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Vanessa Ballou, Recording Clerk