Final Minutes

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, September 16, 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*

Public:
FactTV*
Michael Miller (MM)*
Meg Staloff (MS)

1. **Mike DeSocio called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and introduced all attendees.**
2. **Changes to Agenda**
   MD made a motion to cross out the duplicative RFP for plowing and sanding. EB seconded. The motion was approved by the 4 SB Members in attendance (MD, DW, EB, EMB).
3. **Review Draft Minutes**
   A. Regular Agenda Meeting – September 02, 2026
   MD made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2026 meeting as drafted. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously with 4 of the SB Members voting in favor (MD, DW, EB, EMB) and BM abstaining.
   B. Minutes from Special SB Meeting
   The SB did not hold a Special Meeting. MD made a **motion** to table. The motion **passed** unanimously.
4. **Members of the Public**
   A. Scheduled Member of the Public-5 min
   Meg Staloff (MS) -Southern Vermont Economy Project Manager/CEDS Implementation Specialist
   MS explained SeVEDS's (Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies) role and why it requests annual municipal funding. The organization supports business development, community development, and regional economic planning. It helps municipalities and nonprofits navigate increasingly complex issues, identify resources, and connect with appropriate state or regional contacts. The organization works with local schools, including Leland and Gray, to help students explore careers, connect with employers, and potentially remain in southern Vermont. Local contributions provide flexible funding for projects that are difficult to fund through grants and can also serve as required matching funds for grant applications.

   The SB and MS discussed the Town's efforts to determine how to deal with the Town's former Schoolhouse which is currently vacant. Among the possibilities discussed were the possibility of converting it to uses such as affordable/low-income housing or senior housing. MS noted that several nearby communities face similar challenges and offered to help identify state programs, developers, housing organizations, and other communities with relevant experience.

MS emphasized that SeVEDS's role is often to identify who to call rather than solve the problem directly. MS offered to attend the Building Use Workgroup meetings, answer questions by email, and identify appropriate resources.

B. Unscheduled Members of the Public- 2 Min

None.

5. Warrants

A. Payroll

MD made a **motion** to approve payroll warrant 2710 in the amount of $1,644.68. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

B. Accounts Payable

MD made a **motion** to approve accounts payable warrant 2711 in the amount of $27,342.67. EMB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.

6. Old Business

A. Building Use Workgroup Meeting September 12

EB provided a brief summary of the Brookline Building Use Workgroup (BBUW) September 12th public meeting. The meeting went well and was attended by 30 people. The financial presentation helped to inform the group regarding potential costs of the various options. A nonbinding straw poll was conducted at the end with voice votes. No one was in favor of continuing the status quo (eg, leaving the Schoolhouse vacant), 2 were in favor of moving the Town Office to the Schoolhouse, roughly 12 were in favor of renting the Schoolhouse, and roughly 14 to 15 were in favor of selling the Schoolhouse. Note that people could vote for multiple options. BM stated that he was not happy with the meeting and explained that he believes that the process and findings were flawed and he questioned the facts presented. He also felt that MD and EB were too heavily involved in the workings of the BBUW which was supposed to be an independent committee, and he characterized the process as being driven by MD and EB. MD disagreed with him responding that their roles were strictly supportive and that he and EB did not drive the process. MD reminded BM that the plan was always to have him help with the financial modeling. MD repeated that the financials are soft, not definitive, with most of the assumptions and estimates coming from the BBUW's research. The Town will need to pursue one of the options to further solidify the numbers. Following this exchange BM left the meeting at 6:53 PM.

After BM's departure, EB clarified that the BBUW sets its own agendas, chooses whom it interviews and talks with to get information, develops its own presentation materials and handouts, and will write its own report. The process has been transparent, and the estimates and assumptions used for the modeling have been thoroughly described and changes have been openly welcomed. The meeting went well and the public applauded the BBUW at the conclusion of the September 12th public meeting.

The SB briefly reviewed the topics discussed at the September 15th BBUW meeting, including the advantages and disadvantages of having the buildings appraised and conducting a Town-wide survey.

B. Update Ordinance for Recycling Bin

EB summarized information from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) regarding Vermont Statute 24 V.S.A. § 2201 that governs the illegal dumping of trash. The Town can enforce the statute by having the Town attorney or a designee of the Town issue a ticket to people who violate the dumping statute. Ticket books are available from the Judicial Bureau; there is a process for issuing the tickets that includes a court appearance and a fine up to $800. The SB decided to have the Town attorney prepare and send a warning letter to the person(s) responsible for previous and the most recent illegal dumping.

C. Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets

MD **motioned** to table this discussion on the Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by the four SB Members present (MD, DW, EB, EMB).

D. Town Lister Update

There was no update on the potential lister. The SB discussed did discuss updating the pay rate for the listers to provide different rates based on experience.

E. Hill Road/Ellen Ware Update

Hill Road Historic Stone Arch Bridge

The SB discussed an invoice for $2,700 for a change in scope to cover a design change to one of the guard rails to avoid having the stonework damaged during plowing. The SB will vote on approving the change in scope at the next meeting. And will ask the contractor to send a final bill for everything except the change in scope for the guard rails.

The SB is coordinating with the Historic Group to plan a celebration for the reopening of the historic stone arch bridge – potentially on the long weekend in October. The SB also discussed the possibility of creating a small area for cars to pull over near the stone arch bridge.

Ellen Ware Road Culvert Replacement

The replacement culvert has been installed. The only remaining work is installation of the guard rails which are scheduled to be installed the week of September 21st. Work needs to be completed by September 30th, or the Town will need to request an emergency extension.

Project Close-out

Once the state and FEMA agree that the projects are completed satisfactorily, Melissa Brown, Treasurer, can start the close-out process to receive the final FEMA funds.

F. **RFP for Plowing and Sanding**

The SB discussed the draft RFP (Request for Proposal) for plowing and sanding and decided to include language in the RFP about having the contractor secure a performance bond to cover the plowing work and require insurance coverage of up to $2 million per occurrence and $4 million in total.

The plan is to open the bids at the October 7th SB Meeting, but the SB discussed the potential of making the decision about awarding the contract at a future meeting – as needed.

G. Cemetery Commission Update

The Cemetery Commission has not yet met. The SB agenda for the next meeting to include an action item for the vacant seat.

H. Paving Update
If it doesn't rain the paving on Grassy Brook Road is expected to be completed by Friday, September 18th.

7. New Business

A. Engineering Design RFP Approval for Culvert 57
The scope of work for the RFP needs to be drafted based on the requirements identified from the hydraulic study and recommendations made by Scott Jensen. MD **motioned** to table further discussion and action of the engineering design RFP. EB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by the four SB Members present (MD, DW, EB, EMB).

B. Emergency repair of bridge on Grassy Brook Road
EMB recommended that the Town follow the requirements of the Purchase Policy and issue an RFP sometime this fall with the goal of having the bridge repair work completed next spring MD **motioned** to table further discussion regarding the emergency repair of the bridge on Grassy Brook Road. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by the four SB Members present (MD, DW, EB, EMB).

C. RFP for Plowing and Sanding
See 6.F. above.

8. Reports and Updates

A. Building Commissioner – Bruce Mello
No update; BM left the meeting at 6:53 PM.

B. Emily Beer
The Property Valuation and Review Docket have received the report from the Hearing Officer regarding the Ames Property Tax Appeal, and their review and approval may take 6 months.

C. Highway Supervisor – E. Mark Bills
EMB has been doing general road maintenance and finishing a variety of projects. He expects the materials for the new shed to be delivered soon and will undertake the construction with help from the Highway Assistant, David Roach, within their regular hours and highway projects.

D. Doug Wellman
No Update.

E. Mike DeSocio
Has asked MB to give an update on the budget as of June 30, 2026.

9. Communications

- Rescue Inc. Meeting on September 29th at 6:30 PM. EB encouraged the SB Members to attend the meeting.

10. Set Agenda

A. Regular Meeting October 7, 2026
1) Minutes from September 16, 2026 Regular SB Meeting
2) Members of the Public: Andrew Toepfer – Bull Creek Common Lands
3) Open bids for Plowing & Sanding
4) Cemetery Commission
5) Pay Rate Adjustment for Listers
6) Cease and Desist Letter for Illegal Dumping and SB Designee to Enforce Vermont Statute 24 V.S.A. § 2201

7) Engineering Design RFP for Culvert 57
8) Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets
9) Hill Road: Change in Scope for Guard Rail
10) Other

11. .Other Discussion Not Requiring Action

None.

12. Adjourn the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Vanessa Ballou, Recording Clerk