Final Minutes

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, October 07, 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)*
Alex Stradling (AS)*
Win Clark (WC)
Tanner Winot (TW)
Mary Hickey (MH)*
Stanley Noga, Jr. (SN)*

1. **Doug Wellman called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and introduced all attendees.**
   Mike DeSocio participated by Zoom and DW chaired the meeting. Melissa Brown joined via Zoom at 7:14 PM and left at 9:10 PM.
2. **Changes to Agenda**
   The following agenda changes were requested: moving 7.B. Open bids for plowing and sanding for discussion after agenda item 4 and add under 7. New Business authorizing the Town Clerk to open the Round Schoolhouse. DW made a **motion** to make the changes to the agenda. EMB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.
3. **Review Draft Minutes**
   A. Regular Agenda Meeting – September 16, 2026
   DW made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the 16th September 2026 meeting as written. EB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.
4. **Members of the Public**
   A. Scheduled Member of the Public-5 min
   Dan Towler, Brookline Historical Society, cancelled his attendance.
   B. Unscheduled Members of the Public- 2 Min
   None.
5. **Warrants**
   A. Payroll
   DW made a **motion** to approve payroll warrant 2714 in the amount of $10,529.89. BM seconded. The motion **passed** with 4 (DW, BM, EB, EMB) voting in favor and MD unavailable to vote due to a dropped internet connection.

   DW made a **motion** to approve payroll warrant 2712 in the amount of $2,006.56. EMB seconded. The motion **passed** with 4 (DW, BM, EB, EMB) voting in favor and MD unavailable.
   B. Accounts Payable
   DW made a **motion** to approve accounts payable warrant 2715 in the amount of $552,711.08. EB seconded. Most of these costs were related to the highway projects including the paving of

parts of Grassy Brook Road and the Ellen Ware and Hill Roads projects. The motion **passed** with 4 (DW, BM, EB, EMB) voting in favor and MD unavailable.

DW made a **motion** to approve accounts payable warrant 2713 in the amount of $283.95. EB seconded. The motion **passed** with 4 (DW, BM, EB, EMB) voting in favor and MD unavailable.

6. Old Business

A. Building Use Workgroup Meeting September 12

Mary Hickey reported that the Workgroup has reviewed the first draft of their report and expect to submit the final report to the SB soon - by the end of October at the latest. MD noted that he anticipates having a few comments, but not new numbers, only suggestions regarding the text to clarify some of the financial numbers. He suggested that the Workgroup present the report to the SB so that the SB has an opportunity to ask questions. MH noted that the Workgroup was charged with preparing the report independently. Stan Noga commented that he was okay with presenting the report to the SB as long as it was compliant with the Open Meeting Law and noted that this was likely to take some time during a meeting. MH to send a note to the Workgroup regarding the SB request. DW thanked the Workgroup for all of their work.

B. Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets

BM explained that he preferred to take a simpler approach to the Policy rather than creating a more detailed document. He **motioned** to table further discussion of the Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets. EMB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members. BM will draft the policy and plans of having it reviewed at the November 4th SB Meeting.

C. Town Lister Update

No update is available regarding the potential lister.

D. Pay Rate Adjustment for Listers

EB **motioned** to raise the base salary (hourly rate) of listers to $25 per hour for new employees and to $28 per hour for employees with 2 or more years of experience. DW seconded. EB noted that the lister job is a skilled position that requires a lot of training. DW recommended that the SB reviewed the pay rates across Town positions. Because the suggested increases put the listers pay higher than some other Town positions, EB amended her original motion regarding the rates and suggested recognizing other experience that provided skills relevant to the lister position. EB moved to approve her **amended motion** to raise the base salary rate of listers to $20 per hour for new employees and to $25 per hour for employees with 2 or more years of lister experience or equivalent experience. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

E. Hill Road/Ellen Ware Update

<u>Hill Road Historic Stone Arch Bridge</u>

The Hill Road project has been completed. The SB clarified that the change in scope discussed at the September 16th meeting that was attributed to a design change in the guard rails was actually for the cost of the Gotextile fabric installed to mitigate erosion. The cost of doing the upgrade to the guard rails is still to be determined.

<u>Ellen Ware Road Culvert Replacement</u>

The Ellen Ware culvert replacement has been completed.

F. Cemetery Commission Update

The Commission has not met, and they still need to find a new chair. MD informed the SB that there were negative comments posted on Facebook about the Riverside Cemetery, the Cemetery Commission, and the SB regarding damage to gravestones and on-going mowing issues. DW will bring the posting to the attention of the Cemetery Commission.

G. Paving Update

The paving has been completed and under budget.

H. Emergency Repair of Bridge (B5) on Grassy Brook Road

The SB discussed whether the Town needed to hire an engineer to define the repair work but agreed that based on guidance from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) the repair currently proposed to keep the short bridge (B5) from being further undermined was straightforward. The Town has received a grant for $25,000 for this work. At some point in the future the short bridge (B5) will need to be replaced. EMB will ask ANR for a description of the repair for the RFP (Request for Proposal) and plan the repair for Spring of 2027. The SB will review and approve the RFP at the next meeting.

7. New Business

A. Title Six Coordinator

EB **motioned** to appoint Marjorie Ray, Town Clerk, as the Title Six Coordinator. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

B. Open Bids for Plowing & Sanding

<u>Bid Opening After Agenda Item 4. Members of the Public</u>

The Town received bids for plowing and sanding from Winot Work and A.S. Clark & Sons for $55,000 and $66,478, respectively. The A.S. Clark & Sons bid includes liability insurance of two million per occurrence and four million total at a cost of $11,312 for the increase in coverage over one million per occurrence and two million total as well as the performance bond which is 5% of the total. Win Clark (WC) explained that in previous years their contracts included coverage of one million per occurrence and two million total which is the industry standard, what all the other towns require, and what VTrans (Vermont Agency of Transportation) requires. The performance bond is not usually required for plowing and sanding. BM made a **motion** to table deciding until the next SB meeting. DW seconded. The group acknowledged that if the additional insurance requirement is dropped, another RFP will need to be issued. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

Both companies bid $35.00 per yard for sand. BM **motioned** to table discussion of the sanding bid. EMB seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

<u>SB Discussion</u>

The SB discussed removing the requirement for the additional insurance coverage and the requirement for the performance bond and reissuing the RFP. DW **motioned** to reissue the RFP for plowing and sanding minus the additional insurance requirement and the performance bond. BM seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

The RFP will be reissued and readvertised as revised with plans to open the bids and decide at the October 21st meeting.

C. Cease and Desist Letter for Illegal Dumping and SB Designee to Enforce Vermont Statute 24
EB **motioned** to table discussion of the cease and desist letter. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

D. Engineering Design RFP Approval for Culvert 57
Before discussing the draft RFP, the SB discussed the funding needed for the repair of Culvert 57 once the engineering design is established. The work is likely to cost significantly more than the $200,000 structure grant awarded the Town. EMB suggested the Town apply for a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant for $500,000 (80/20 grant) this year. The TAP grant would be awarded next summer. EMB also noted that the Town does not have a structure fund similar to the paving fund for which the Town budgets $65,000 every year. The SB discussed the implications of receiving a TAP grant on the already awarded structure grant.

The SB discussed the draft RFP and worked out a potential timeline leading up to receipt of bids on November 18, 2026, review time for VTRANS), and an SB decision at the December 2, 2026 meeting. DW **motioned** to approve the RFP as amended. The motion **passed** unanimously by all 5 SB members.

E. Opening the Round Schoolhouse to the Public
MD **motioned** to give Marjorie Ray, Town Clerk, authority to show the Round Schoolhouse at her discretion. DW seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously (5/5).

8. Reports and Updates

A. Building Commissioner – Bruce Mello
BM summarized his service activities on the Town Buildings, including the need to address powder post beetles in the buildings and work to winterize the Schoolhouse. BM plans to attend the October 20, 2026 Preservation Trust Meeting regarding energy efficiency and historic buildings. An expert with over 30 years of experience insulating historic buildings will be attending the meeting.

BM would like to use the leftover MERP (Municipal Energy Resilience Program) funds to purchase storm windows for the Brookline Meetinghouse.

B. Emily Beer
Regarding the Ames Property Tax Appeal, the Hearing Officer accepted the value set by the Board of Civil Authority (BCA) for the property. The Seatons have appealed the BCA decision regarding their property to the Superior Court. The SB agreed that EB could contact Bob Fisher who serves as the Town's attorney.

C. Highway Supervisor – E. Mark Bills
EMB has been working on grants and road work. Some of the lumber needed for the new salt and sand shed has been delivered. He said that Colin Bratton is willing to attend an SB Meeting to talk about the TAP grants.

D. Doug Wellman
Rescue Inc. will send the Town a new contract which will include an increase that is less than inflation.

E. Mike DeSocio
MD and Melissa Brown (MB) presented the budget vs actual expenses for the first quarter (July 1, 2026 through September 30, 2026) of the 2026/2027 fiscal year. The General Fund is unfavorable by roughly $10,000 because of delinquent taxes, but the Highway fund is on budget.

9. Communications

SeVEDS sent a survey for the Town to complete.

10. Set Agenda

A. Regular Meeting October 21, 2026

1) Minutes from October 7, 2026 Regular SB Meeting
2) Colin Bratton Regarding TAP Grants
3) Award contract for Plowing & Sanding
4) RFP for Repair of Short Bridge B5 on Grassy Brook Road
5) Cemetery Commission Update
6) Round Schoolhouse Committee Appointments
7) Cease and Desist Letter for Illegal Dumping and SB Designee to Enforce Vermont Statute 24 V.S.A. § 2201
8) Approval to Use Town Attorney for Seaton Property Tax Appeal
9) Budget for 2027/2028 Fiscal Year
10) Approval to use remaining MERP funds
11) Other

B. Regular Meeting November 4, 2026

1) Minutes from October 21, 2026 Regular SB Meeting
2) Colin Bratton Regarding TAP Grants (if not scheduled for October 21st)
3) Policy for Use of Town Buildings and Assets
4) Other

11. Other Discussion Not Requiring Action

BM provided a summary of a local meeting where Amanda Janoo, Democratic candidate for governor, spoke. He informed her about the pressure rising taxes was creating on town budgets in small rural communities such as Brookline.

12. Adjourn the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Vanessa Ballou, Recording Clerk