

Wallingford Selectboard

Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2026

Selectboard Chair Kathy Luzader called the regular Selectboard meeting at Town Hall to order at 6:30 p.m.

Selectboard Members Present: Rob Barker, Carolyn Behrendt, Kathy Luzader and Glenn Mayer. Anne Awad was not present.

Others present at the Meeting: Sandi Switzer, Phil Baker, Heather Johnson, Peg Soule, Bob Soule, Lois Johnstone, Ron Boucher, Nan Dubin, Claire Bornath, Denise Eddy, Tom Barone, Erika Berner, Brian Ferguson, Michael Luzader, Todd Galiano, Jay White, LeaAnn Denno, Susan Gilbert, Sandra Hochberg, Melinda Humphrey, Dennis Cointreau, Naomi Bombardi-Wilson, Jason Gaboury, and Greg McCormack from Peg TV.

Agenda Amendments. None.

Minutes. C. Behrendt made a motion that was seconded by G. Mayer to approve the 02/02/26 Minutes. Motion approved (4-0).

Pay Orders. G. Mayer made a motion that was seconded by C. Behrendt to approve pay orders totaling \$58,935.49. Motion approved (4-0).

Road Commissioner's Report. Road Commissioner Phil Baker said the road crew had been hauling sand and there were no major maintenance issues.

Town Road and Bridge Standards. Board members and the road commissioner reviewed revised 2026 Town Road and Bridge Standards. By consensus, the Board approved the new standards.

Project Manager for Sand Shed Replacement. By consensus, the Board agreed to explore hiring a project manager for the sand shed replacement permitting process.

Honorable Mentions. Art Nemeth and Jerry Reynolds for operating the transfer station in sub-zero temperatures; Rotary members for donating use of their building for a five-town emergency response planning forum; Wallingford Village Market for providing lunch at that forum; and Glenn Mayer, Bill Weiss and Jim Bagnall for representing Wallingford at the forum.

Public Comments. Rob Boucher expressed his appreciation to Highway Department and transfer station employees for their dedication to the Town and their hard work. Mr. Boucher said the Town was lucky to have such dedicated employees.

Freedom of the Press Resolution. Board members took no action on Montpelier resident Merrick Grutchfield's request to adopt a Resolution regarding Freedom of the Press and the importance of print journalism. G. Mayer said he appreciated the intention, but he added it was not well thought out as far as taxing social media outlets to fund print media. K. Luzader agreed.

CAI Technology Property Mapping Agreement. This item was tabled at the last meeting in order to request more information on two lines in the Property Mapping Maintenance Agreement marked N/A (non-applicable). With a response from the contractor, the Board by consensus

approved signing the mapping agreement for annual maintenance from April 2026 thru March 2027 in the amount of \$2,300.

Tier II Report. By consensus, the Board approved submission of the annual Tier II report for the town garage detailing a list of chemicals used and/or stored at the facility with amounts, locations, Safety Data Sheets, routes from points of purchase to the town garage, chemical characteristics, etc. It was noted Road Foreman Steve Lanfear had reviewed the document for accuracy and signed it for submission.

Boy With the Boot 3D Update & Questions. Jason Gaboury of Northeast 3D joined the meeting via telephone. The Board reviewed a list of questions from Mr. Gaboury regarding water features for the replica, mounting the statue in the fountain, and reinforcement. They further reviewed and concurred with Road Crew member Charlie Woods' responses submitted to Mr. Gaboury prior to the meeting. It was noted plumber Bill Lohsen had responded via email to a question from Mr. Gaboury regarding the water feature.

Mr. Gaboury indicated he had all the information he needed to proceed with the project. No timeframe was given for completion.

Residency Requirements – Recreation Appointments. K. Luzader said she had prepared a statement to share before open discussion of this topic. K. Luzader said:

According to the VSA, Title 31, Chapter 5, Statute 203, the Selectboard may appoint members to a recreation committee with terms not exceeding one year. The committee can recommend members, but the Selectboard ultimately appoints them.

The Recreation Committee can recommend new members, but only if they have enough members to reach a quorum, which is three when you have a committee of five - like our current recreation committee. Up until the last Selectboard meeting, the Recreation Committee could not reach a quorum because while there are currently three members, they were unable to find a common meeting time and could not make recommendations. Two people came to our last Selectboard meeting wanting to be appointed to the committee. One is a resident and the other is not a resident. After discussion, the resident was appointed to the committee.

The nonresident had tried to join the committee in the past but was told she couldn't because of her non-residency. Her research into this matter revealed that the committee bylaws had no residency requirement. With that information, along with the fact that this nonresident participates actively and enthusiastically, in other Wallingford organizations (such as Rotary, and as chair of the Wallingford Day committee, which is a subcommittee of the Recreation Committee), she was also appointed to the Recreation Committee. With these two appointments, the Recreation Committee now has five members, enough members to reach a quorum more readily, and have regular meetings again.

One reason this concerned some current recreation committee members was having a nonresident making decisions on how taxpayer money was being spent. While we understand in principle the reasoning behind this concern, in practice this money cannot be mishandled. Money the Recreation Committee uses is presented as a budget request the year before its use to the Selectboard. This amount is decided by the committee, not by an individual member. Further, the Selectboard takes this request and then makes the decision of how much the committee will actually receive. The committee then decides, as a committee, how to best spend this money, not a single individual. Most of the Recreation budget is non- discretionary,

with a tiny fraction available for miscellaneous purchases. The committee also has a limit on how much it can spend for each category, and it has to follow the purchasing policy of the Town, which includes bid requirements and approval for higher priced items. I doubt the committee would ever approve an expenditure that did not benefit the residents of Wallingford. And, if it ever did, that expenditure would not be approved by the Selectboard. The individual in question has deep ties to the Town of Wallingford, and an apparent concern for the Town's growth and wellbeing. Seeing that not enough Wallingford residents have stepped up to join this committee in at least the last six months, we decided to appoint this non-resident, who we are sure will be very helpful to this committee. Just a reminder, the Recreation Committee is responsible for organizing two work days to help prepare the Recreation fields and Elfin Lake for the busy spring, summer, and fall seasons, and it is also responsible for organizing the Memorial Day parade in May. That's a lot of volunteer work, and with the new appointments, the committee is finally full. We'd like to thank the Recreation Committee for all the work it has done to benefit Town residents, and we look forward to what it decides to do in the future.

Recreation Committee member Brian Ferguson said the nonresident had attempted three times in the past to join the committee and was denied a recommendation. He said the committee had offered to let the nonresident be a non-voting member. He read aloud Recreation meeting Minutes from January 2025:

The group discussed the option of having one person from an adjacent town on the board, as well as increasing the size of the board. Most members were concerned about the precedent that allowing people from other towns would set. Nonresidents on local boards has been a big issue in the past and given the Recreation Committee oversees a budget and manages land most felt it would be difficult to justify having a nonresident on the board. All members were ok with having non Wallingford residents participate in discussions and attend meetings but were cautious about adding nonresidents to the voting membership. The board agreed we could formalize having a non-Wallingford resident as a nonvoting member, as we have discussed in the past. Shannon will revise the bylaws to remove the non-Wallingford resident member and we will discuss the remaining changes at the next meeting.

K. Luzader said there was precedent for nonresidents serving on municipal committees and commissions. Planning Chair Erika Berner said a Rutland city resident with planning expertise served on the planning commission in 2017-18 when there were vacancies.

Denise Eddy said anyone with Ms. Johnson's commitment, drive, energy and enthusiasm would be welcome on the Conservation Commission. Mr. Ferguson said Ms. Johnson's character was not in question. He said appointing a nonresident would set a dangerous precedent. He said the Town had a policy that committees/commissions recommend appointments and the Board acts. He questioned why the Board had not followed policy. Nan Dubin said there were no bylaws prohibiting nonresidents from serving on the Recreation Committee. Michael Luzader questioned how the Board's action set a dangerous precedent. He said the appointee was a person looking to do good. Peg Soule said any policy regarding appointments indicated a committee recommends and the Selectboard acts. She noted the Selectboard does not necessarily have to approve a recommendation. Tom Barone said he understood Mr. Ferguson's point about nonresidents spending taxpayer dollars. He suggested a policy limiting committees to one nonresident. K. Luzader agreed with Mr. Barone.

R. Barker said the Board does not need an appointment policy. He said board members appointed citizens interested in doing good work for the Town. He said the Board would not load up committees with nonresidents. He said Ms. Johnson's appointment was made in good faith to

taxpayers given her dedication to the Town. G. Mayer said the Board should use discretion to decide appointments on a case-by-case basis and make judgements based on the merits of the candidates.

Letter to VTrans Regarding Bridge 15. The Board revisited the topic of the letter drafted by R. Barker to VTrans regarding Bridge 15 that was tabled at the last meeting. G. Mayer revised the letter and K. Luzader the document aloud:

Dear VTrans;

Following the 1/20/26 hearing at Wallingford Town Hall and after living with the Bridge 15 detour for two years, we wish to share our findings about this project. This bridge is an important part of our town's transportation system. The need for this structure is as valid now as it was in 1940 when it was built to replace a steel bridge. Three alternatives have been presented to address the bridge closing due to its being in an unsafe condition.

- 1. Disinvestment. Permanent closure of the bridge.*
- 2. Build a pedestrian bridge which would need to be maintained by the town of Wallingford.*
- 3. Replacement of the bridge.*

Alternative 1. *Permanent closure poses problems that cannot in our opinion be mitigated. The intersection at Routes 103 and 140 has critical safety concerns, even after recent updates.*

These concerns come from people who have both driven trucks through the intersection as well as observed the traffic patterns there.

- Semi-trailer trucks and even large straight trucks have trouble entering Route 140 from the north/west. If vehicles are stopped at the intersection to turn left on Route 103, trucks can't make a turn to get through the intersection unless those vehicles back up. Snow and ice make this situation especially treacherous. There is no room for a turning lane.*
- Visibility of Route 103 from the intersection is limited in both directions. The speed limit of 50 mph is often ignored, adding to an already dangerous condition.*

Alternative 2, *a pedestrian bridge, is an option that was easy to reject. The town is not equipped to maintain a pedestrian bridge. The benefit would be limited to a small number of people from our community and does not justify the expense of upkeep.*

Alternative 3. *Replacement of the bridge would mitigate the hazardous conditions mentioned above, allowing vehicles traveling southbound on route 103 to avoid the current intersection. The bridge also provides an important alternative access to East Wallingford in the event of flooding on Mill River, as the existing bridge on 140 generally becomes submerged well before bridge 15. Other benefits include improved response of emergency vehicles, and better access for mail and other deliveries. Replacement of the bridge is the best and most viable solution to the situation.*

Dennis Cointreau said he drove through the Route 103 and 140 intersection twice daily with no safety concerns. He said VTrans had redesigned that intersection to create a safe turning radius. Tom Barone said he had to reverse his vehicle at that intersection on several occasions in order for tractor trailers to complete turns.

Sandra Hochberg asked the Board whether they had visited the bridge; could cite traffic counts; and were aware of the number of residents on Village Street. She said the draft letter was one-sided and did not take into account the safety of Village Street residents. She said citizens attending the Bridge 15 public hearing offered suggestions to improve the safety of the nearby intersection (lowering the Route 103 speed limit, signage, turning lanes etc) and the Board had not incorporated any of the suggestions into the VTrans letter. Nan Dubin said Bridge 15 had been there for over 30 years and people purchased property on Village Street knowing the bridge

existed. She said bridge replacement would be paid with state and federal tax dollars not by Wallingford taxpayers.

G. Mayer said at the January public hearing, citizens were overwhelmingly in favor of replacing the bridge. He added several offered suggestions for intersection improvements. LeaAnn Denno said traffic on Village Street had increased significantly in the early 2000s. She said VTrans closed Bridge 15 for safety reasons and improved the nearby intersection. Tom Barone reiterated his suggestion to lower speed near the Routes 103 and 140 intersection and regrade 103. After additional comments, G. Mayer said more revisions to the VTrans letter would be made and the topic revisited at an upcoming meeting.

Agenda Building. None.

Selectboard Comments/Concerns. R. Barker extended his appreciation to Town Administrator Sandi Switzer for honoring Jane Quigley by featuring a photograph (taken by Jill Stone-Teer) on the annual Town Report of honey jars filled with Jane’s last batch.

Other Business. K. Luzader said annual Town Reports had been mailed to residents. She said the Conservation Commission held a highly successful Cabin Fever Fun Day. She noted Rutland Regional Planning Commission was gearing up for the first public hearing required to adopt the 2026 Rutland Regional Plan update. The first hearing is scheduled for March 17, 2026, at the RRPC offices in Rutland.

C. Behrendt made a motion that was seconded by R. Barker to adjourn at 8:23 p.m. Motion approved (4-0).

Submitted By: Sandi Switzer/Town Administrator

APPROVED THIS 2nd Day of March in the year 2026:

Wallingford Selectboard

Carolyn Behrendt _____

Rob Barker _____

Anne Awad _____

Kathy Luzader _____

Glenn Mayer _____