TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Monday, May 19th, 2025 – 6:00 PM

West Brookfield Town Hall, 2 East Main Street, Conf. Room (1st floor).

MINUTES

PRESENT: Roland Sickenberger, Vice Chair; Cami Lamica, member; Brad Merkel, Clerk (virtual via Teams); Theresa Cofske, Town Administrator; Beth Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS; Chief Hagglund, Police; Sergeant Letendre.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

6:02pm: Motion to open the meeting

MINUTES FOR April 29 BOS MEETINGS (Open and Executive Sessions) for approval.
Tabled until 5/27/25 as Mr. Merkel hasn't been able to read through the minutes. Ms. Lamica had also not been at the April 29th meeting.

Mr. Sickenberger announced that the meeting was being recorded for the transcription. *Mr. Sickenberger added that he will bring in a USB Speakerphone to help the audio for future meetings.*

APPOINTMENT OF ALEXANDER GREEN FOR FULL TIME OFFICER/CONSTABLE –
Chief Hagglund explained that we were able to pick him up in the Academy and that the Select Board already appointed him as a Full-Time Student Officer. We had been paying his salary from February to May 1st, when he graduated. He's currently in field training and is in his second week.

Ms. Lamica asked if he was the 7th. Mr. Hagglund said yes, he's the 7th. She then asked why the appointment was only for 6 weeks. Ms. Gobeille explained that he will be appointed again with the rest of the officers in the yearly appointments for July.

Motion to appoint Alexander Green as Full Time Officer/Constable for the term, May 19th – June 30th made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor? Aye. - unanimous

DEEP ROOTS DISTILLERY/ FARMERS MARKET PERMIT -
Ms. Gobeille explained that the Deep Roots will have a stand at the Farmer's Market for the summer season each Wednesday. Patrons can sample a 1 oz. pour only at the stand, then purchase items to bring off site for consumption. She further explained that the fee was $25 for the season as it is for an agricultural event.

Motion to approve a Farmers Market Pour Permit to Deep Roots Distillery for the Farmer's Market on Town Common in West Brookfield on Wednesday's from June 4th through October 8th, 2025 between the hours of 3pm to 6pm made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel as explained and written – unanimous

RESIGNATION OF ADVISORY MEMBER, CATHERINE LAMICA FOR ACCEPTANCE –
Motion to approve the resignation of Advisory member, Catherine Lamica made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Mr. Sickenberger and with gratitude for her service on Advisory. Ms. Lamica abstains – 2 yes.

6:12pm - Mr. Sickenberger announces that:

> The Select Board will enter into Executive Session pursuant to the following G.L.s c.30A, §21(a)(1) and (2) listed below and will reconvene in open session following Executive Session.
>
> Meeting in Executive Session Pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, sec. 21(a)(2) to Discuss Preparations for and Status of Collective Bargaining with New England Police Benevolent Association Local 83B (Sergeant).

Motion to move into Executive Session made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel. Roll Call Vote: Roland Sickenberger, aye; Camie Lamica, aye; Brad Merkel, aye. - unanimous

7:05pm - Back in Open Session

Mr. Sickenberger announced that they had voted to approve the Superiors Contract as presented with some minor amendments in Executive Session.

TREASURY WARRANTS –
Motion to approve AP FY25 Warrant 23 and Payroll FY25 Warrant 23 made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Mr. Merkel added that he would come in to sign the warrants. Mr. Sickenberger added that as long as we have 2 signatures it's a quorum, so no need to.

TA REPORT –
Ms. Cofske explained that the primary focus has been the contract (MOU).
Now that that's done, I'm wrapped up the budgets with Advisory. I have 2 meetings this week and 1 more next week, then I'll be able to plug into the amounts for the Motions, the dollar amounts for the Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting. She further added that Beth has started the printing process on the warrants, so we'll have copies of both warrants. Ms. Cofske mentioned that she had just finished the draft of what she calls the Administrative Warrant and explained that it's a summary of all articles broken down into layman's terms so that everybody can understand what they're voting on, for those that don't regularly attend or understand the old-fashioned legal jargon. Ms. Cofske also said there will be backup documentation, some of it will be for handout materials. Others will be the preparation of your binders. So, all of you are going to get a 1" binder: for the Select Board, Advisory, Town Clerk, Moderator, Town Accountant, Treasurer and myself, Town Council. Heather White/Town Counsel will be attending. Ms. Cofske explained that she will be sitting down with the moderator, Bill (Mansfield) and going through the motions, all of the handouts and going through a dry run with him.

There are questions in budgets – Water Director, question of a missed step in 2019, which he said he was finally approved for in 2019 for the missed step in 2016. Ms. Cofske will look into this and work with the Treasurer Collector, Jillian and Donna, Accountant. She is hoping to piece together things together and see if a step was missed and if so, we can make good on this to Wes. We are basing it on the data. It was noted that they are Commissioners, so they're autonomous and they have an Enterprise. The Town must vote on this.

Ms. Cofske explained that there has also been an ongoing personnel issue, which she's been working on. She would like a conversation with the Select Board and has already had a conversation with Brad (Mr. Merkel) and would like to have independent conversations with the rest of the Select Board. We could also put a placeholder in the Budget.

CMRPC: Ms. Cofske is working on the Master Plan Application, hopefully by the end of day tomorrow.

Green Communities: Ms. Cofske explained that they were looking at 14,000 and are now down to 9000, that we'd need from free cash, so that's an Article. One of the projects did not meet the full funding criteria for Green Communities and that was for improvements at the Highway Dept. for weatherization.

Property in Town: Ms. Cofske explains that we will look into the Bylaws to see where we stand. The parties involved had reached out to the Zoning Board, but the Zoning Enforcement Officer should be involved. The ZEO should be well-versed in our Zoning bylaws and pertain to property. The neighbors of the property on Lake Shore Dr. would like us to do something and to help the individual. Also, in the end it would be good to create a kind of resource for folks who find themselves in that type of situation, but don't know how to get help. Trying to figure out a bylaw to bring to Special Town Meeting or Annual Town Meeting. Perhaps local groups like Boy Scouts or a similar group could help with any clean-up. Could be an issue of hoarding as well. The Board of Health could get involved, condemning the building perhaps, but I don't think we would resort to that. Ms. Cofske added that we can come up with something.

COMMENTS & CONCERNS

Mr. Merkel added that he was concerned about the fountain not working at the Asparagus Festival and was told by the Town Administrator and was told the Common Committee is working on repairing it. Mr. Merkel also suggested having all decisions go through Select Board re: the Common. Mr. Sickenberger added that we can't get rid of that committee, as the members are elected.

Mr. Merkel also added that there are optics and there may be questions about an additional police officer and using free cash. Ms. Cofske answered that we will address it if it comes up at Town Meeting.

There were comments about what level the school may come in at as well. This may add concern to the Town if the level is high. Options were discussed about potentially shutting down schools or moving students from one to another. Ms. Lamica added that if you went for a proposition 2 ½ and the main focus was on the school, then you'd have all the supporters of the school come out. You'll get a 50/50 draw.

That could be a potential situation for North Brookfield.

Mr. Merkel added that we have 3 or 4 massive buildings, where could allocate our kids, but we still have police buildings and fire buildings, which are decrepit. A Police Administrative complex could be utilized if something happened with the school. Ms. Lamica added that a school would require a significant investment to remodel it. Mr. Merkel responded that it wouldn't be as much as building a brand-new building.
There was further discussion about the dwindling population in middle and elementary schools in North Brookfield. Ms. Lamica mentioned that she has questions about school choice, which she hopes to get an answer on soon from the Finance director.

Mr. Sickenberger stated that the NEXT BOS MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MAY 27th at 6PM.

7:30pm - Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

5/27/25 — Authorized Party for the BOS Date/Time

5/28/2025 — BOS ~~Clerk~~ Date/Time