TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 – 6:00 PM

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

MINUTES

STAFF PRESENT: Catherine Lamica, Vice Chair; Brad Merkel, Clerk; Theresa Cofske, Town Administrator; Beth Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS; Paul Lapenas and Ryan Shepard/CAC.; Nicole Perrault, Asst. Treasurer Collector; Jillian Patch, Treasurer Collector; Bob Richard and Cassie Paolucci/Common Committee; Madalyne Chamberlain, Amanda Wodyga, Melannie Waugh, Heather Gough/White Christmas Committee; Melinda Barnes/Advisory Committee;

ABSENT: Roland Sickenberger, Chair.

GUEST: National Grid representative; Melinda Barnes's daughter; Mr. Gough, resident; West Brookfield resident.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

6:02pm: Meeting called to order.

MINUTES FOR September 16th BOS Open Session meeting approval.
Motion to approve the minutes of the September 16th Open BOS Session for approval made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

APPOINTMENT OF NICOLE PERRAULT AS ASSISTANT TREASURER COLLECTOR POSITION – Position was posted internally. Ms. Lamica expressed the importance of having backup support in the Treasurer Collector office and that this new position has additional different duties.
Motion to appoint Nicole Perrault to Assistant Treasurer Collector position for the term of October 14, 2025 – June 30, 2026 made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

DISCUSSION OF LETTER FROM TAMMIE GADBOIS RESIGNING FROM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GROUP -
Motion to accept the resignation from Tammie Gadbois from the Emergency Management Group made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

CHARTER/SPECTRUM AGREEMENT UPDATE – Mr. Lapenas explained that PEG funds were released at Town Meeting in 2025. WBCTV can currently broadcast recorded content on both Spectrum Channel 191 and the Town's website. They also have an active Community Bulletin board on Spectrum Channel 191 and asked for submissions from Depts and Committees in the Town and have advertised in local publications. Mr. Lapenas explained that they should look to appoint a new Studio Coordinator for WBCTV soon and interviews are currently underway. Mr. Lapenas further explained that the Studio Coordinator's salary and upgrades to the

studio are to be paid for with franchise fees and not taxpayers' dollars. He also mentioned that they had 1st contract negotiation meeting for the Charter/Spectrum contract for the Town and will update the BOS after the next meeting.

6:15pm – TUCKER RD. POLE HEARING – Ms. Lamica read the Pole Hearing out fully. No abutters in attendance for discussion. National Grid representative explained that there is a new house on Tucker Rd., which they are bringing the power out to and are installing a new stub pole to support the current one on the road.
Motion to approve National Grid to install 1 JO Pole on Tucker Rd., West Brookfield beginning at a point approximately 140 feet North of the centerline of the intersection of Woods Rd. National Grid to install a new stub pole 21-84 to support Pole 21 made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

FY2026 SNOW PLOWING CONTRACT WITH All Construction Services, Inc. – Ms. Cofske explained that the Request for Bids went out, a contractor responded and that the rate/hour was established in the budget process.
Motion to approve the FY2026 Snow Plowing contract with All Construction Services, Inc., 20 Wigwam Road, West Brookfield, MA 01585 at the rate of $150/hour made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

DISCUSS DRAFTING MOU FOR HIGHWAY DEPT. CDL LICENSING – Ms. Cofske explained that they used to train in house for CDL, but are now required to go to a school for certification. The MOU indicates that once the employee has achieved their CDL they are committing to work with the Highway Dept. for an additional 2 years.
Motion to approve moving forward with the MOU for CDL licensing with the Highway Dept. made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes)

RT. 9 PROJECT PROPERTY APPRAISALS/RESERVE FUND TRANSFER – Ms. Cofske explained that she had put forward to the Advisory Committee for a reserve fund transfer in the amount of $14,250 for 2 appraisals, which were not anticipated as they were owned by Wildlife and Game, subsequently bought by Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries with the use of Federal Grant money. There is a clause in that contract, which required yellow book appraisals for the parcels, which needed to be taken for the Rt. 9 project. The contracts found for the Rt. 9 project between the Select Board and MassDOT indicate that any work for legal or appraisals is paid for by the Town. In the Contractor's or Engineer's agreements there are no sources indicated from which appraisals are being paid. there is also no source of funds for the appraisals and the Highway Dept. also has no allocated line item for appraisals in their budget.

Ms. Lamica asked how appraisals and legal invoices have been paid for previously for the Rt. 9 project. Ms. Cofske indicated that ARPA funds have been used, but that money has already been spent or allocated, so we need to pay them from another line. She added that the only appropriate budget line in the budget, which could be used to pay appraisals is Professional Services, but that does not have enough funds in it to cover the current appraisal invoices, which require payment. Discussions to be pushed to the October 28th BOS meeting to see if a Special Town Meeting will be required to pay these invoices and for extra Legal costs incurred this year.

TREE LIGHTING ON THE COMMON (members of Common Committee and White Christmas attendance) – Ms. Chamberlain explained that the current tree on the common, which has been lit each year has problems. It's

too big to maintain and is diseased. Lights have not been taken down each year and they may need to replace some of the strings currently on the tree for this upcoming Holiday season. A new tree was planted last year on the Common, near to the large tree's location and it's expected to eventually replace this tree. White Christmas received a quote of $7000 from Arsenault in Spencer to take care of stringing/taking down the lights for the tree on the Common and storing them as the person who previously (Jimmy Rust) did this each year is unable to do so as the tree has grown too large for he and his crew to maintain the lights on safely. The current lights on the tree have been on since 2023 and may not be functioning anymore and/or sections (strings or bulbs) may need to be replaced. There was a discussion re: the transition to the new smaller tree and ways to still illuminate the Common in a festive manner if the smaller tree were the main tree lit instead of the larger one as White Christmas does not have a budget to pay the $7000 fee quoted. White Christmas will see what strands work currently and will decide how to move forward with having a lit tree on the common for the December 7th Lighting of the Tree event.

Ms. Lamica asked if White Christmas would let the Select Board know if the lights work by their next meeting and how to move forward this year. We can bring this information to the Town residents at the Annual Town Meeting to decide whether they want to pay the$7000 each year. WBCTV also offered the use of the Community Bulletin on Channel 191, Charter/Spectrum to advertise the plight of the tree if it were needed. Item to be added to the agenda for BOS meeting on October 28th to discuss further and wants to make sure that the Tree lighting is an event. White Christmas will also add information to their booklet explaining this year's lighting on Town Common. Ms. Lamica

The Common Committee members added that the research for a new tree for the Common last year was extensive and well thought out with regard to the type of tree most suitable for the Common. They can also look into lighting elements of the fountain, which will add to the Holiday look on Town Common. Additional work and projects have also been completed or are in progress on the Common and they may put out a press release explaining all the work, which is taking place on the Common. They've had additional help from John Arello/Town and Country who has donated his time calling Dig Safe and shaping the trees on the Common. A second tree near the current Christmas tree's location has also been identified as being diseased. Ms. Paolucci and Mr. Richard stated that the Common Committee is committed to help the Town Common. Once again, Mr. Lapenas offered the use of the Community Bulletin to get the word out to the Town.

FY 2027 OPERATING BUDGET PROCESS – Ms. Cofske explained that she was not involved with the budget process for FY26 until February, but is committed to starting the FY27 budget process earlier this year and will involve all members of the Financial Team (Accountant, Treasurer Collector, Advisory Committee, Consultant Mr. Madden). The Financial consultant, Mr. Madden is currently working on projections. We may ask Depts. to prepare 2 budgets. Ms. Cofske added that if cuts were to happen, departments could include narratives drafted about what the impact would be to residents. Discussions also took place about building up stabilization, improving the Town's bond rating and planning ahead for future years. MMA has issued a wonderful article of the Financial Pressures of Municipalities in Massachusetts, which has been uploaded to the Town website. We need to focus the importance on all Financial departments working together. Capital stabilization should be used for smaller projects. We should consider borrowing on bigger Capital projects.

Ms. Cofske explained that they have taken measures in place to identify areas to bring in revenue: restructuring Dept. licensing fees (Select Board, Gas/Plumbing), adding a Meals Tax and possibly resurrecting the Short-Term Bylaw. Economic Development help from Mass. Development following the Rt. 9 corridor project would help the Town bringing business in and providing help to current local businesses. She explained that the FY27 budgets will be a collaborative effort with Departments and all members of the Financial Team.

The Select Board agrees to meet with Advisory and John Madden to start the FY27 budget process.

LAKE WICKABOAG SPECIAL USE PERMITS – 3 requests for Special Use Permits.

Motion to approve the following 3 special permit requests for Lake Wickaboag indicated below made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

a. ***Special Use Permit for Blackstone Valley Bass Anglers event on Lake Wickaboag, July 11th, 2026.***
b. ***Special Use Permit for Josh Kemp Memorial Ice Fishing Derby on Lake Wickaboag, February 1, 2026.***
c. ***Special Use Permit for Aluminum Rigs event on Lake Wickaboag, April 11, 2026.***

Mr. Merkel stated that with the high level of use at the Lake for events, he would like to see that all boats are washed off before entering Lake Wickaboag, due to Hogwort. Perhaps additional help from Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association.

SELECT BOARD LICENSE FEES UPDATED – Ms. Gobeille explained that the current Select Board license fees were compared to other neighboring Towns. Some she felt were excessive and others could be increased. In addition, there are some licenses, which the Town did not have in place and are recommended. The Select Board members reviewed the fees.

Motion to approve the attached Select Board License Fee Schedule as drafted made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

TREASURY WARRANTS FOR APPROVAL –

Motion to approve FY26 AP Warrant #8 and FY26 Payroll Warrant #8, as presented made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

TA REPORT –

<u>Capital Planning Committee</u> – New meeting to be scheduled. Ms. Cofske to attend. Ms. Cofske asked for a list of assets from the auditors, which they maintain and a list of all insured assets from our Insurance company. She'd like to see the process from CPC and what they'd require from Departments for their future needs (5 year, 10 year).

<u>Master Planning Grant</u> – Once State Contract is in it will be executed. Did let Planning Board know it was received. Will circle back with them to move forward. Existing plan had not been implemented. Will see what we can implement now.

Digital Equity Grant - $72,000 grant received. Notified Library and Senior Center. Working with CMRPC and will coordinate with them.

Green Communities – All set for competitive round in the Spring. Final report for FY26 has been submitted. Items to look for in next round: HVAC replacement and thermostat software controls in Town Hall. (Approximately cost for new HVAC unit is $80,000). Additionally, Gr. Communities does not fund vehicles anymore. Chris Collins/Collins Ctr. is connecting us with other company involved in this. Looking into use for Police Dept./Town needs, etc.

Town Hall Restoration project – Structural engineers evaluated the roof and it needs to be stabilized. Assessment forthcoming. Plan will go to contractor.
Accountant has informed us that funds ($21,000) found from a previous insurance claim can be put towards this cost.

Solar Pilots – Working to get Pure Sky and Harold/RRG will be working with the Town on the pilots. Ms. Cofske attended a DOR hearing re: New bylaws for solar/battery storage. DOR is looking to staff circuit writers to assist Towns and to provide technical review assistance to help Towns to get bylaws done by their Annual Town meetings.

Water Dept. – Submitted SRF application. Waiting to hear status. Will weigh out what is the better deal for the Town: SRF or USDA.

Quaboag – Speaking with Superintendent and Financial Director re: procurement for MSBA windows/doors project. They have been coming to the Advisory meetings. Will be kept in loop re: discussions with North Brookfield.

Rt. 9 – Schedule put together for upcoming years, specifically for Phase III Engineering costs. Chapter 90 funds would qualify. Jim Daley/Highway Superintendent is looking into this and waiting to hear on another grant. He is speaking with MassDOT. They are speaking about a program to help municipalities with their obligations. He is continuing to investigate funding sources to help with Rt. 9.

Personnel Committee – Had meeting discussing benchmarking and will have another meeting on Oct. 21st.

MMA/MIIA conference – Went to conference with Treasurer Collector. Increase in insurance expected to be in double digits in FY27. More work to be done there.

Office of Business Development/MA – Met with representatives. They are there to help small businesses in MA. Info put up on Town website.

AFSCME Council 93 – Had a conference hearing on the 8th – will be responding to that. May be able to come to an off the record agreement. On Oct. 28th, we will have 2 more hearings.

OTHER –

1) Mr. Merkel asked if Departments could give monthly reports to the Select Board. Ms. Cofske responded that it would be up to the Board. They can be invited to give any news or issues at their meetings and for those who can't attend, put it in writing. Ms. Cofske added that this would bring some connectivity with the Boards/Committees. This will build strength. Ms. Lamica added that it would be great to have at least an update once a month to share with the public. Maybe it's less often, quarterly. Ms. Cofske to create a memo asking for Departments to provide an update, either in person or in writing about any updates in their Department.

Paul Lapenas added that WBCTV would like to start recording Advisory meetings as well for transparency. They are currently using field equipment, but are looking into the automation of recording the meetings.

Mr. Merkel mentioned that North Brookfield has lost their Police Chief to Lenox, MA. There could be an opportunity for shared Public Safety service. Ms. Cofske asked for approval from the Select Board to speak with North Brookfield about this.

Motion to set up a meeting with North Brookfield to have discussions about Public Safety Service made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor – aye. (2 yes).

Next scheduled BOS meeting is October 28th at 6:00pm.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:05pm made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. All in favor, aye (2 yes).

Respectfully submitted,

10/23/25 — 11/10/25

Authorized Party for the BOS — Date — BOS Clerk — Date