TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TUESDAY, October 28, 2025 – 6:00 PM

West Brookfield Town Hall, 2 East Main Street, Conference room, 1st Floor

MINUTES

STAFF PRESENT: Roland Sickenberger, Chair; Catherine Lamica, Vice Chair; Theresa Cofske, Town Administrator; Beth Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS; Paul Lapenas and Jacob Conway (to be appointed)/CAC; Diane Vayda/Common Committee; David Brown/CPC; Melanie Waugh, Heather Gough, Amanda Wodyga, other member/White Christmas.

ABSENT: Brad Merkel, Clerk

GUEST: Mr. Gough, resident; Chris Kiraly Thomas, resident (Hiking sign re: Pynchon Mill).

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

Motion to open the meeting

MEETING MINUTES of October 14th BOS OPEN MEETING FOR APPROVAL - Mr. Sickenberger asked for the minutes to be moved to the next Select Board meeting as he had not attended. ***Motion to move the BOS minutes for October 14th to the next BOS meeting on November 10th made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger. All in favor, aye (2 yes).***

APPOINTMENT OF JACOB CONWAY as WBCTV STUDIO COORDINATOR (PEG ACCESS COORDINATOR) - ***Motion to approve the appointment of Jacob Conway as WBCTV Studio Coordinator (PEG Access Coordinator) for the term October 28, 2025 to June 30, 2026 made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger.***

POTENTIAL NEED FOR SPECIAL TOWN MEETING – Ms. Cofske mentioned that we have appraisals for Rt. 9 project and there is no funding is available to pay them. Total is about $19,000 for these invoices. Also coming down the pipeline is a MassDOT bridge repair on Long Hill Rd. Money is needed for the legal work for title searches for the ROWs once 25% has been completed (plans now being developed). J. Daley/Highway will work on an approximation on up-front costs. Also needed monies for legal deficit (reviews for ATM Warrants), etc. Additionally, there are structural issues with Town Hall Exterior, which will need to be funded. A full roof replacement will be needed. A further structural report will be needed to determine what other elements need to be addressed: bowing walls, trusses split in the roof, etc. Will apply to DCAMM to see if we can bypass steps to get emergency repairs addressed. Funds from stabilization accounts or short-term loans would need to go to a Special Town Meeting for approval. Numbers to be solidified, then we will schedule the Special Town Meeting. It's likely to be early December at the latest.

Mr. Brown asked if the repairs needed to be done in the winter. Ms. Cofske indicated that the structural engineer insisted that the work on the roof needs to be done as soon as possible. She asked the board's participation in meetings during the day if they were available.

Gap in meeting for Ms. Gobeille to copy paperwork from Jacob Conway.

CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS RE: THIS YEAR'S TREE LIGHTING ON TOWN COMMON – Ms. Lamica recapped the last discussion for Mr. Sickenberger from the last meeting (Oct. 14th), which he was unable to attend. Current tree has missing strands. Vendor for recent years wouldn't be able to continue to service Christmas tree on Common – it's now too large and putting on/taking off lights is unmanageable. White Christmas has received a quote from an outside vendor for this service - $7000/each year. Another quote from J. Bonin in Town for $400 to put on new lights. Questions are do we move to the new small tree as the main tree to be lit or purchase additional lights for the current tree. Louise/Historical Commission co-chair and horticulturist indicated that the particular species of the tree we currently light is nearing its life.

The Select Board will revisit the conservation in 2 weeks at the next Select Board's meeting. In the meantime, White Christmas will speak with either the Tree Warden or Louise/Historical about using small lights on the new smaller tree to see if there are any issues. Alternatively, we could light the larger tree anyway, but with limited lights.

HIKING SIGN AT PYNCHON MILL - Ms. Kiraly Thomas explained that as a steward of East Quabbin Land Trust's Pynchon Grist Mill she has indicated that they are looking to place a hiking sign at the Pynchon Grist Mill's kiosk, which will guide the hikers across the street to access the trails. The current placement of the kiosk and parking are deceiving to the direction to the trails as there is a right of way. She will work with J.Daley/Highway on having a sign made. The sign will be paid for by EQLT. Ms. Kiraly Thomas has been working with Conservation on many other projects at the Grist Mill.
Motion to approve the placement of a hiking sign to be installed at the Pynchon Grist Mill kiosk area made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger. All in favor – aye (2 yes).

LAKE WICKABOAG DONOR ACCOUNT – Mr. Brown says that the donor account has been in place since the dredge days. $18,000 left in it and is usable to use on the lake deficit, fanwort, on-going needs of the Lake, etc. He also stated that according to the state, MGL chapter 44.53A states their account is a donor account. Mr. Sickenberger indicated that he has worked out with the Town Accountant how to get any donated money into the account and will forward that information to Mary Beth Czaja. Mr. Brown would like to know if the account can be opened up for private donations? Also, Mr. Brown is looking to get a letter from the IRS for the Town, which could be given to donors for tax deductibility. In addition, Mr. Brown would like to develop a policy around this: what the account is for and how it all works. Ms. Lamica added that clear procedures need to be drawn up on monies going out. Mr. Brown stated that LWPA is advocating for the Lake for the Town. Mr. Sickenberger clarified that this account is a Board of Health Lake Donor account to oversee funds for the lake.

BUILDING INSPECTOR/ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OFFICE CHANGE – Mr. Taylor explained that he and the Zoning Enforcement Officer would like to change their open hours from 4-6:30pm to 4-6pm as there are no residents coming in after 6pm each week. He is working with Ms. Gobeille to get a fillable form on his computer. Mr. Taylor also indicated that he and the ZEO are always available if residents/companies have questions.

Motion to change the hours of the Building Inspector and Zoning Enforcement Officer Open office hours to 4-6pm made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger. All in favor, aye (2 yes).

Mr. Taylor also asked if the Select Board would allow their dept. to move their winter hours up from January to December as work slows down tremendously. Winter hours will go through March and Mr. Taylor states.

Motion to change the winter hours of the Building Inspector and Zoning Enforcement Officer to December 1st through March 31st made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger. All in favor, aye (2 yes).

RESIGNATION FROM CAPITAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER, PAMELA GRIFFING –

Motion to accept the resignation from Capital Advisory Committee member, Pamela Griffing made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger. All in favor, aye (2 yes).

PROCESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES – Ms. Cofske explained that the Select Board should review Executive Session minutes every 4-6 months or so to determine whether to release them. She'd like to start the update process, so we're in compliance for public records and will do this quarterly, maybe 2 sets at a time. It was suggested that the Select Board members come to the offices to read through the Executive Session minutes prior to discussing at a meeting whether they should be released or not.

TREASURY WARRANTS –

Motion to approve FY26 AP Warrant #9 and FY26 Payroll Warrant #9, as presented made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger – All in favor, aye (2 yes).

TA REPORT:

Capital Planning Committee - Ms. Cofske attended their meeting. Gave most current assets schedule for the auditors, fleet schedule from insurance company. This was also sent to all departments with fleets for any updates, then to update with the insurance company. Updated list to go to Capital Planning. Mr. Brown provided an overview of Capital Planning, what Division of Local Services (DLS) provides. Went through what excel forms Departments get to fill out, will streamline.

Digital Equity – Have a conference call meeting tomorrow with Library Director, Senior Center Director and CMRPC and will have kick-off meeting. Will identify who will do what and get the ball rolling.

Town Hall Restoration – Project has turned into a much bigger project. Will have an extra $21,000 to go toward this project (from Town Hall water damage). Louise/Historical will be looking into seeing if asphalt shingles will be acceptable. Asphalt shingles will make a big cost savings. Contractor stated that they've come along way and the asphalt shingles look like slate, but at a much smaller cost.

Water Leland Project – Meeting with the Financial Team, engineers and Treasurer Collector. Discuss timing for putting this out to bid. Waiting to hear from SRF. Ms. Lamica asked if we would be putting this out to bid before going to Town Meeting. Ms. Cofske stated this was part of the process and is working with Ms. Patch (Treasurer) to work out.

WBES (West Brookfield Elementary School) – Ms. Cofske spoke with Superintendent. MSBA will vote tomorrow at 10am. Following vote, a packet will be issued to each school (within 2 weeks) with all numbers on what the Town's obligation would be. Ms. Lamica indicated that we would need to know the timeline from MSBA. A Town meeting and Town vote would be needed regarding funding. Ms. Cofske also stated that the Superintendent has been attending Advisory meetings and keeping them up to date with all information. Ms. Cofske has also contacted he and the school's Financial Director to let them know about the budget preparation meetings with Board of Selectmen, Advisory and Financial departments. They would like to have representations at these meetings as well.

Personnel Team meeting – Meeting on November 4th at 11am.

Charter/Spectrum - Charter contract renewal meeting scheduled for Thursday. Charter is unable to make meeting. Will be rescheduled. Attorney developed a draft of the section of the contract renewal pertaining to the financials.

Legal matters – Ms. Cofske indicated she will get the Select Board caught up.

Written report/dept. updates – Ms. Cofske wanted clarification from the last Select Board meeting on when these Dept. updates would be required (quarterly/monthly) and would they be required in person at meetings. Mr. Sickenberger indicated that this is part of the reason why we have a Town Administrator to pass along this information to the Board. Ms. Lamica answered that this was brought up by Mr. Merkel (BOS clerk) and Ms. Lamica had agreed that Depts. should have monthly or quarterly reports. Mr. Sickenberger thought quarterly reports would be sufficient.

Mr. Sickenberger asked about the dog attacks/hearing. Ms. Gobeille explained that the dog hearing was initially to be scheduled on November 25th, but this has been moved up to November 10th as the current ACO, Leah Shattuck is concerned and would like this hearing to be held earlier.

BOS Joint meeting w/ Advisory: November 3rd, 2025 - 6PM.

Next BOS Regular Meeting Date: November 10th, 2025 – 6PM.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:34pm made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Sickenberger. All in favor, aye (2 yes).

Authorized Party for the BOS 11/10/25 Date

BOS Clerk 11/10/25 Date