TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

TUESDAY, February 17, 2026 – 6:00 PM

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

MINUTES

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

STAFF PRESENT: Roland Sickenberger, Chair; Catherine Lamica, Vice Chair; Brad Merkel, Clerk (virtual); Theresa Cofske/Town Administrator; Beth Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS.

GUEST: Michael Terry/Petrini & Law; Diane Gervais, resident; Andre Lamoureux, resident; David Brown, LWPA; Mary Beth Czaja, LWPA.

6PM: MOTION TO OPEN THE BOS MEETING

MINUTES FOR January 20, 2026 and February 3rd BOS Open Meetings, Minutes for February 3rd Executive Session Meeting for approval – Votes expected.

Motion to approve the January 20th BOS regular meeting minutes made by Ms. Lamica. 2nd by Mr. Merkel. All in favor – aye (3 yes).

Motion to approve the February 3rd BOS regular meeting minutes made by Ms. Lamica. 2nd by Mr. Merkel. All in favor – aye (3 yes).

Motion to approve the February 3rd BOS Executive meeting minutes made by Ms. Lamica. 2nd by Mr. Merkel. All in favor – aye (3 yes).

LAKE WICKABOAG PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION -

Discussions about moving the responsibility of Lake Wickaboag Management from Board of Health to Conservation Commission. Board of Health is autonomous, has elected officials and can shut down Lake Wickaboag immediately if needed. Conservation Commission could do so in 48 hours. T. Cofske to look into the process. It was suggested that there should be a joint meeting with Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association and Conservation Commission to discuss the situation and potential move.

DOG HEARING DECISION REVIEW CONTINUANCE –

Mr. Terry/Petrini & Associates explained the continuance of the dog hearing review to April 10th. Mr. Terry/Petrini & Law is working with Boston Dog Lawyers, who are representing Ms. Grover, on mitigation efforts towards a settlement agreement. He added that Ms. Grover's dog has been neutered, is undergoing behavioral training and conditions have been placed on it if going out in public (dog needs to be muzzled and on a lead). The dog has also been voluntarily moved out of West Brookfield. They have agreed that it would

not return. Mr. Terry will advise the Town if the date of the continuance is moved again or if a settlement agreement has been reached. There are remedies if the owner breaches the agreement and is in non-compliance.

PROPOSITION 2 ½ OVERIDE BALLOT QUESTION TO BE PLACE ON MAY 2026 LOCAL ELECTION OR SPECIAL ELECTION FOLLOWING JUNE 2026 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING –

Discussions about when the ballot question should be presented. There will be many informational sessions for the residents prior to the May elections, so there should be enough information out there for residents to make their decision whether to support the 2 ½ or not. It was decided that May would be a better option than after the Annual Town meeting.

Motion to put the Proposition 2 ½ Override ballot question on the May 2026 Elections ballot made by Ms. Lamica (with reservation). Second by Mr. Merkel. All in favor – aye (3 yes).

TA REPORT -

FY2027 Budget Process – Requested 2 budgets from each department. 1) Budget with level service (2.5% salary increase and 2% increase in expenses). 2) Budget with significant cuts if 2 ½ override doesn't pass (Operations, services or staffing).

Ms. Cofske explained that the $600,000 gap in the FY2027 operational school budget has increased to $720,000. This amount ($720,000) will be shared between the Town and the school. So far the department budgets have been reduced by $170,000 with more cuts forthcoming.

Ms. Cofske explained that some Town contracts will be renegotiated and others bid out to other vendors. Pathfinder will present their budget soon.

Ms. Cofske has drafted a letter to Senator Durant's office outlining the FY2027 Budget process and the many significant financial challenges West Brookfield is facing and is looking for support. A meeting has been set up with Mr. Durant.

Proposition 2 ½ preparations – Ms. Cofske is working with the financial team and developing narratives, which will be understandable to the general public. The focus is to show the Town that we are doing everything we need to do to. Ms. Cofske to reach out to Department of Labor and Services to complete an audit of our financial policies in order to help the Town.

David Manzello/RRG – Mr. Manzella is looking for the Town to have local tax exemptions for seniors. The Town may have not adopted this MGL, which may require a Town vote. He is also looking to pursue a Hopkinton Bill for the Town, which is a supplemental tax assessment on new construction.

Ms. Cofske to meet with groups after next week about the public informationals, which will be led by Fire, Police and Highway.

Fire Chief Interview Committee – Town Clerk to swear in Fire Chief Interview Committee members today at 5:30pm. They will whittle down the applicants to 3, which will be interviewed by the Board of Selectmen.

Community Block Grant/CDBG grants – For projects which serve low-moderate income areas (known as "the depot" in Town) will benefit. The Town will pair this grant with a Mass Works Grant to cover the Town's contribution. Discussions regarding an ADA Plan, which the Town had, but needs a current one.

- There will be a Community Block Grant Strategy Presentation on Thursday, February 19th at 6pm at the West Brookfield's Senior Center.

Mary Lane Health Group – They are looking for funding and support to build an Urgent Care with medical specialties in Ware at the old Mary Lane Hospital site, which will be a great resource to the West Brookfield residents. Ms. Cofske asked if a Board member would be available to represent West Brookfield at meetings. Mr. Sickenberger and Ms. Lamica both offered their support and would make meetings if available. Ms. Cofske to share their details with the coordinator for this initiative.

CMRPC Contract – Master Plan contract has been executed.

Green Communities – We met with Tom Lesure/Energy Conservation Inc. to discuss the heating situation in Town Hall. Discussed a Green Communities grant (in the Spring round of grants), which will reconfigure the system for the heating/ac controls in Town Hall. The HVAC system in the attic space needs to be replaced as well. Cost would be $90,000 for the HVAC unit alone. Ms. Cofske looking into seeing if the grant coverage would be full or partial.

Solar – Ms. Cofske is working with Planning Board and Town Counsel to move forward with Pure Sky/Beaman Rd. project. Regional Resource Group (RRG) solar specialist is looking at all solar contracts for the Town.

Cable TV – Meeting with Committee last week to review Charter contract proposal. A lot of progress has been made with Charter.

Cable Advisory Committee – They are working towards wiring up the Board of Selectman's conference room in Town Hall for meetings.

Town Hall Project – Bob Haveles/consultant is looking to move forward with the application's submission to the State. Would like Historical Commission's support using the state line shingle.

OTHER BUSINESS -

Motion to approve FY26 AP Warrant #17 and FY26 Payroll Warrant #17, as presented made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel. All in favor – aye (3).

Next BOS Meeting will be March 3rd, 2026 at 6PM.

7:36pm - ***Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel. All in favor – aye (3).***

3/11/2026

Authorized Party for the BOS Date

3/17/26

Town Clerk Date