TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

TUESDAY, March 10, 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; On-Call Firefighter/Lieutenant Reardon; On-Call Firefighter J. Bonin.

RESIDENT: Henry Brogna

6:01PM: MOTION TO OPEN THE BOS MEETING

FIRE CHIEF INTERVIEWS -

All candidates were asked the following questions below from the Board of Selectmen.

1. Describe yourself and your experience in fire services that makes you a great candidate for this position.
2. Describe an innovative approach you have implemented or would implement in your fire department to improve operations.
3. What types of training do you believe are crucial for new firefighters joining your team and what would a proper training outline consist of for current staff?
4. How important do you feel it is to have a good relationship with the Police Department, Emergency Medical Services and other related agencies and how would you create a solid relationship with them?
5. How do you ensure that safety standards are maintained during all fire operations?
6. How would you coordinate with police and medical services during a large-scale disaster?
7. Define integrity and how does it relate to the position of Fire Chief?
8. Do you have experience using various software/programs that are used by Fire Departments for reporting calls to the state, payroll and expenditures?
9. Do you have experience with preparing and overseeing a departmental operating budget, capital planning and grant applications/administration?
10. If you received community complaints about fire safety standards, how would you address their concerns?
11. How would you handle a situation where a union firefighter disobeys safety protocols during an incident?

12. If a new fire code was issued that is not grandfathered, what is the approach you would use in implementing the new fire code?

13. How will you coordinate your full time or multi-part time jobs with this part-time Fire Chief position?

Candidate #1: Thomas Bessette

Candidate #2: Daniel Driscoll

Candidate #3: Brian Charron

Outcome of the interviews:

All Selectboard members felt the interviews went well and the scoring was close for all candidates. The final scores had Candidate #1, Mr. Thomas Bessette leading with 157 ½ points. It was stated that Mr. Bessette had significant experience with budgets, grants, which would greatly benefit the Town.

Motion: ***I move that the Board of Selectmen, based on the results of the scoring and ranking process, nominate Thomas Bessette for the position of Part-Time Fire Chief, contingent upon satisfactory reference checks to be completed made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. Vote: Unanimous (3–0), all in favor.***

Mr. Sickenberger and Ms. Cofske to discuss the Fire Chief's salary and contract prior to the next Board of Selectmen meeting on Tuesday, March 17th, 2026

INSURANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE -

Ms. Cofske asked that the Board of Selectmen review the charge of the Insurance Advisory Committee (next page).

Insurance Advisory Committee – Charge

Purpose:

The purpose of the Insurance Advisory Committee shall be to review the Town's insurance coverages, policies, claims history, and risk management practices, and to provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen regarding opportunities to improve coverage, reduce risk exposure, and control insurance-related costs. The committee may also review proposals, policy changes, and renewal options presented by the Town's insurance providers or brokers and offer advisory input.

Responsibilities

- Review the Town's current insurance policies and coverage levels.
- Review claims history and trends where appropriate.
- Consult with the Town's insurance carriers, brokers, and legal counsel when necessary.
- Identify opportunities for improved risk management practices.
- Provide advisory recommendations to the Board of Selectmen regarding insurance coverage and policy considerations.

Membership

The committee shall consist of eight (8) members appointed by the Board of Selectmen, which may include:

- One (1) Member of the New England Police Benevolent Association, Inc., (NEPBA) Unit A – Patrol Officer's Union
- One (1) Member of the New England Police Benevolent Association, Inc., (NEPBA) Unit B– Superiors Union
- Two (2) Members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 93, Local 1364 – Highway and Clerical
- One (1) Individual with experience in insurance, finance, risk management, or municipal operations
- One (1) Non-Union Employee
- One (1) Resident-at-large
- One (1) Retired Town Employee

Term

The committee shall serve for a period of three (3) years, unless extended or dissolved by vote of the Board of Selectmen.

Motion: *I move that the Board of Selectmen accept the Charge for the Insurance Advisory Committee as presented made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. Vote: Unanimous (3-0), all in favor.*

Motion: *I move that the Board of Selectmen establish the Insurance Advisory Committee comprised of 8 members as presented for 3-year terms made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. Vote: Unanimous (3-0), all in favor.*

Motion: *I move that the Board of Selectmen accept the following appointments to the Insurance Advisory Committee:*

Craig Charron, member of the New England Police Benevolent Association, Inc., (NEPBA) Unit A – Patrol Officer's Union;
Matt Letendre, member of the New England Police Benevolent Association, Inc., (NEPBA) Unit B – Superior's Union;
Anne Garwood-Hampp and Kathleen Landry, members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 91, Local 1364 – Highway and Clerical;
Donna Allard, an individual with experience in insurance, finance, risk management or municipal operations;
Beth Gobeille, Non-Union Employee;
Eric von Bleicken, Resident-at-large;
TBD, Retired Town Employee.

for 3-year terms, from March 10, 2026 until extended or dissolved by a vote of the Board of Selectmen made by Mr. Merkel. Second by Ms. Lamica. Vote: Unanimous (3-0), all in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS -

Ms. Cofske – Proposition 2 ½. Spoke with Division of Local Services and Legal counsel. Discussion about combining the totals for Proposition 2 ½ for FY2027 ($600,000) and FY2028 ($250,000) together into 1 ballot vs. keeping them separate. Concerns of whether all monies could be used in 1 year if both Proposition 2 ½ amounts are put together. Ms. Cofske is waiting for figures from the schools. Ms. Lamica to check on the current rates for loans.

Ms. Cofske further explained that Tantasqua will not have any additional students attending from West Brookfield, but is still waiting on Pathfinder and Smith.

Next BOS Meeting will be March 17th, 2026 at 6PM.

7:32pm - ***Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Lamica. Second by Mr. Merkel. Vote: Unanimous (3-0). All in favor.***

3/31/2026

Authorized Party for the BOS Date

3/31/26

BOS Clerk Date