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AUG 19 2026
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TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

July 7, 2026

Meeting Minutes

Members and Staff Present: BOS Chair - H. Brogna, BOS Vice Chair - R. Sickenberger, Town Administrator - T. Cofske, Assessor - Gail Camara-Marks, Police Chief Hagglund, WCBTV Camera Operators J. Conway and R. Shepard

Public Present: M. Pontbriand, D. Pontbriand, D. Piechota, D. Provencher, M. Astrella, G. Piermarini, N. Goncalves, M. Jankins, C. Sposato-LaChance, J. Brooks, T. Dojimo, M. Barnes

Appointments/Resignations

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to appoint Chris Sweenie to the Agricultural Commission for a three (3) year term, Clinton Jury to the Agricultural Commission for a three (3) year term, Timothy Morrell to the Agricultural Commission for a three (3) year term, Andrew Fusco to the Agricultural Commission for a two (2) year term, Doreen Piechota to the Board of Registrar for a three (3) year term, Theresa Cofske as the ADA Coordinator for a one year term, Theresa Cofske as the Records Access Officer for a one year term, Jeff Taylor as the Building Inspector for a one year term, Nicolas Thomo as the Zoning Enforcement Officer for a one year term, Kelly Hitt as the Senior Center Director for a one year term, Susan Raymond to the Council on Aging for a one year term, Pamela Gemme to the Cultural Council for a three (3) year term, Susan Rowden to the Cultural Council for a three (3) year term, Jane E. Higgins to the Cultural Council for a three (3) year term, and Amy Agro as the Library Director for a one year term.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2-0 in favor

Joint Meeting with Board of Assessors to Fill Vacancy and Consider the Appointment of Phil Landine until the Next Local Election

Assessor G. Camara-Marks explained that at the last local election, no one had run for the vacancy and therefore had to consider those with the highest number of votes as write-in candidates for the Board of Assessors and no one accepted. Phil Landine has come forward to accept serving on the Board. In accordance to MGL C. 41 sections 6 and 11 the vacancy must be filled by a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the remaining members of the Board of Assessors. She further explained she is the only remaining as the other member is out on leave at this time.
MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to appoint Phil Landine to the vacancy on the Board of Assessors until the next local election.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: R. Sickenberger (Board of Selectmen), H. Brogna (Board of Selectmen) and G. Camara (Board of Assessors all in favor.

D. Provencher asked the board if an individual can serve on two boards because he is currently on the School Committee. R. Sickenberger replied, that he can.

Place the Board of Selectmen Vacancy for the Remainder of the Term (ending May 2028) on the September 1, 2026 State Primary Election Warrant

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to place the Board of Selectmen's vacancy on the ballot during the September 1, State Primary election.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 - 0

Discussion of Drop Center FY2027 Wednesday Schedule

This item was tabled in anticipation of Mr. Borlikoski joining the meeting to discuss the Drop Off Center and possibility of resuming the Wednesday schedule for FY2027.

Discussion to Reinstate Part-Time Patrol Officers for FY2027

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to reinstate part-time Patrol Officers for FY2027.
SECOND: H. Brogna
DISCUSSION: Chief Haggland explained that with the FY2027 budget, the department lost two full-time Patrol Officers. In order to lay off full-timers, you have to lay off the part-timers. Both full-timers found positions so they did not need to be laid off. The lay off of the part-timers went into effect. There is only one part-timer that is interested in coming back. The Chief does not see any downside to having the part-timer back to cover a holiday, vacation or sick time and it would be helpful. They are fairly inexpensive compared to paying an overtime shift.
R. Sickenberger asked if the part - timers had to be laid off because of language in the contract. Chief Haggland confirmed that was the case.
T. Cofske, explained the issue of optics as a result of this information not being provided at the public presentations.
R. Sickenberger asked if another part-time officer would be hired. Chief Hagglund stated that he would choose to wait and let the dust settle before considering a new hire. The department's budget looks to be difficult to be able to stay within as it is.
H. Brogna recommends the motion include language that caps it at the $3,125.00 that is in the budget. R. Sickenberger does not find it necessary to add the cap in the motion because the dollar amount is already in the budget.
VOTE: 2 - 0

Mr. Borlikoski has entered the meeting, and the Board has decided to go back to the tabled item, the discussion of the Drop Off Center.

Discussion of Drop Off Center FY2027 Wednesday

Mr. Borlikoski explainte that they have been trying to figure out how to keep the drop off center open on Wednesdays. He is willing to do the senior work-off program, to keep it open on Wednesday's and from now until November.
H. Brogna read aloud a section of the policy that states "This applicant is not eligible if you're a town employee." And further reads "This applicant is not eligible if you're a town employee."
Discussion back and forth ensued.
T. Cofske informed everyone that this is the policy that the town has in place and it describes within the policy the programs voted for. The policy was read aloud in almost its entirety. The policy is attached to this record. She further explained that the purpose of this program is not to fill in a budget gap in an existing position.
Lengthy discussion ensued.
The board overall understood what Mr. Borlikoski was trying to do and appreciated his efforts on trying to use the program to keep the center open on Wednesdays. They decided that the policy does not allow for the program to be used in the way in which was presented because the eligibility requirements would not be met.

Year-End Appropriation Transfer Request(s)

R. Sickenberger asked what the transfer request from accounting is about. T. Cofske explained that the funds are needed because the financial audit came in higher than had been anticipated. It had been budgeted for $15,000 but came in at $19,000.

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request of fiscal year 2026 of $4,229 from the telephone internet account 192-5340 to accounting auditor consulting services 01-135-5308.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 - 0

The next group of transfer requests are from the Selectman's office.

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request in the amount of $14 from the Selectmen's Dam Maintenance account 01-122-5310 to the police and fire insurance account 01-195-5715 SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 - 0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request of $6,638.37 from Selectmen's Executive Secretary account 01-122-5112 to legal counsel services 01-122-5730
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 - 0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request in the amount of $650.71 from the Selectman Executive Secretary account 01-122-5112 to computer tech support services account 01-155-5306.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 - 0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request in the amount of $1,2724 from the Selectmen's Executive Secretary account 01-122-5112 to the computer tech software account 01-155-5385.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 -0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request in the amount of $1,859 62 from the Selectmen's Dam Maintenance account 01-122-5310 to the municipal lighting account 01-424-5210.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 – 0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year end appropriation transfer request in the amount of $10.31 from the Selectmen's Dam Maintenance account 01-122-5310 to the drop off center account 01-433-5580.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 – 0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year appropriation transfer request of $0.25 from Selectmen's Dam Maintenance 01-122-5310 to long-term debt account 01-751-5915.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 - 0

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the year end appropriation transfer request in the amount of $1410.00 from the Selectmen's Dam Maintenance account 011-122-5310 to life insurance account 01-915-5170.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2-0

Quaboag Youth Sports Complex Proposal Update

The proposal that Quaboag Youth Sports had submitted for use of the former elementary school's indoor basketball court and the outdoor sports fields is under review by Town Counsel.

Continued Discussion of Potential Charter School in West Brookfield

D. Pontbriand informed the board that the school that is interested in coming to West Brookfield is going to be having a board meeting and they will be voting on whether or not they want to pursue this. She indicated that they would need to run a 10-year model on success, which would take a few months. So, they would give a "yes" on the vote to pursue and then they'd run that model to provide confirmation for this fall as to whether or not they want to move forward.

She went on to explain the two different avenues for a charter school. One way the town can approach this would be by forming a local board that would be made up of community members or people from the area that they would be working in, and they would act in the best interest of that school. The difference being the town could actually hire a school to come in and maintain control as far as if you're not liking the direction of where education is going and basically remove them. Or you can have a replication model where a proven provider of a a school such as what I'm speaking to, they come in and they just replicate to the region and area of the needs for that for the children.
D. Pontbriand met Alyssa Hopkins, the Assistant Director of Charter Schools at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). She also met with Erica Brown, the Director of Mass Public Charter Schools Association. Both were helpful with providing an understanding of the process and were supportive of this.

She informed the board that as a group there are two things they have to do. This group needs to form a nonprofit organization so that they can begin looking for donors from businesses in the area to support this town. She mentioned that once approved as non-profit the group and town could enter into an agreement and they would be able to financially assist the town to support the building and costs associated with the building.

She further stated that even if this Charter School votes against coming to West Brookfield, they have guaranteed us they will provide curriculum, curriculum information, and anything we need to be successful. So that would be our easiest path forward um is basically having approve a successful model to come in.
I think once they do their proven track record as far as their model, they will be willing to say, how many years have they been?

T. Cofske asked if the group will be providing the DESE meeting information?
D. Pontbriand stated that it was basically a zoom meeting set up as a Q&A session on how the process goes. They had provided a lot of information even refitting the school um bringing it up to code because once we took ownership it's got to go back up to today's code but that is all grant related and there's a lot of money that DESE can provide so it's not going to be any burden to this to the town.

R. Sickenberger asked what the estimated number of students that they foresee in that school and what grades would the school offer?

She explained that's hard to know because they haven't nailed down towns, but basically right now we're looking at the Quaboag Regional School District and other surrounding towns that are testing low.

Looking at grades K through eight but the Charter schools generally start with grades K through four. Enrollment would be open to the town of West Brookfield initially to a certain cap and then you branch out. D. Pontbriand spoke more about the potential for grants. There's a grant that would go along with the school that would come in which would be just setting up a new school or there would be a grant. It's the same grant system. It's just coded differently, but it could be up to like $500,000 to set up the school with items needed such as all their desks, books, pencils, everything they need to come in. So, there is a lot of money there for this to be very successful.

R. Sickenberger stated that it is not money for the town. That's money for setup. D. Pontbriand responded by agreeing and explained that the school itself would this wouldn't be any burden on the town whatsoever. This comes straight from DESE.

D. Pontbriand explained that the non-profit would be formed to help financially and would want an agreement with the Town to hold the property for the Charter School.

T. Cofske explained that Mass General law requires town property that is to be leased or sold it must follow Uniform Procurement Chapter 30B – Disposition of Property. She further explained what the process would entail. She further recommends that considering the property is a major asset of the Town, the Town should do its due diligence and make a thoughtful decision that is not quick nor based on a particular portion of the community but rather for the best interest of the whole community. The Board should host public information meetings to obtain input from the community as far as what they want to see that property used for and there may be several proposals that come forward as a result (civic, educational, senior center, fire station, safety complex, etc.). This asset should also be considered in the Master Plan updates that are underway.

Lengthy discussion ensued on the topic of how property fits into economic development, strategic planning, informational sessions and process for issuing a request for proposal (RFP).

Summary of Economic Development Meeting

T. Cofske provided a summary of the Economic Development meeting with CMRPC, H. Brogna and herself. She explained that we are pursuing an update on the Master Plan that would include a corridor study and an economic development strategy plan.

The first phase um the first phase which has been completed consisted of the existing conditions assessment and the implementation progress review and that started taking place uh in October 2025 and was completed in January 2026 by CMRPC.

Phase two took place from January 2026 through June which consisted of identifying and planning for environmental justice requirements and planning layouts to prepare and coordinate sessions for public input and what those sessions are going to look like.

Phase three will be the identification of strategic priorities and beginning to build that roadmap. We will be hosting community workshops, conducting senior focus groups, conduction survey outreach, synthesize community input, identify and prioritize goals and actions needed with a focus on business development, site identification, ecotourism, branding, and sustainability.

The deliverable of this project will be a finalized plan with marketing tools. There will be the implementation matrix, a site map, tourism strategy, branding guidance, and a public story map. With this, we will work on inclusion in the Community and Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan within Worcester County.

Approval of Trench Permit for the Leland Road Pump Station Upgrade Project

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the trench permit application for the Leland Road Pump Station Upgrade project.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2 – 0 in favor

Water Commission Chair, Philip Guerin – Providing an Update on the Leland Road Water Pump Station Project

The Chair of the Water Commissioners, Phillip Guerin, thanked the Selectmen for the opportunity to explain where they are with the Leland Road Water Treatment Plant project. He presented the updates in a slide presentation. The presentation began with the history of the project going back to 2019 with the administrative order issued by the Department of Environmental Protection. The order was to build a treatment plant to address the iron and manganese in the water. Both are very common contaminants in Massachusetts and New England. Due to COVID everything was put on hold.

The project is fully engineered, and construction went out to bid in December 2025. In January the project was awarded to WM Schult Construction in the amount of $5,872,475.00. In April a pre-construction meeting was held, and the contract was officially executed. Site preparation began in June, and they are actively working on the site. The project is expected to be completed in November 2027.

P. Guerin explained how the project will be paid for. He informed the board that the Town voted and approved borrowing up to $6.24 million for the project. The Water Department has applied for several grants for this project. They have received one from the

The Water Department also applied for an emerging contaminant grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for $500,000.00 towards engineering. Additionally, the department has also applied for a Congressional Directed Spending Grant with Congressman Neil which has been approved for just over $1,000,000.00, and the department will continue to apply for any additional grants that become available.

The remaining amount not covered by the grants will be paid for through a State Revolving Fund loan which could provide about $800,000.00 in loan forgiveness if approved. The remainder of the loan would be paid by the water enterprise account which is generated by the water user fees collected. It will cost about $15.00 more per quarterly bill (about 11%).
P. Guerin offered to come back in six or eight months and give another update.

Treasury Warrants: FY26 AP Warrant #27, FY26 Payroll Warrant #27, FY27 AP Warrant #1 and FY27 Payroll Warrant #1

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year 26 AP warrant number 27 and fiscal year 2026 payroll warrant number 27 as presented.
SECOND: H. Brogna
VOTE: 2-0 in favor

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to approve the fiscal year 2027 AP warrant number one and fiscal year 2027 payroll warrant number one as presented.
SECOND: H. Brogna
Vote: 2 -- 0 in favor

Town Administrator's Report

There is a leak coming through the ceiling in the Great Hall. The contractor will be here tomorrow to do temporary repairs. The architect is considering if we should just apply to DCAM for an emergency exemption allowing us to go forward with the roof project without having to go through the full procurement process that you normally would. T. Cofske explained the process for applying to DCAM. Additionally, she explained the state has not issued approval to use asphalt shingles versus slate which is holding up the original roof replacement project.

The leaking has caused damage to the Great Hall. There's a large area now that is exposed plaster. Some of the paint is hanging down where the water has come through. Some plaster has fallen to the floor There's also significant cracking that spans to many areas of the ceiling including underneath the chandelier. And I'm very concerned about that chandelier. A hold on allowing pickleball has been put in place.

Other Business

Former Town Accountant, Donna Allard, who's recently retired is requesting the board to consider voting to allow her to use the town's retirement health insurance plan.
R. Sickenberger asked what the minimum number of years a town employee has to work before being eligible.
T. Cofske stated that the personnel handbook states ten (ten) years.

MOTION: R. Sickenberger, to allow Donna Allard to participate in
the town's retirement health insurance plan.
SECOND: H. Brogna
DISCUSSION: H. Brogna stated that he is just afraid of what's going to happen if setting a precedence.
R. Sickenberger agreed.
VOTE: 2 – 0 not in favor

Comments or Concerns

H. Brogna was able to attend Helen Lapenas' 99th birthday party last week. She is now officially the oldest citizen of West Brookfield. She has her pin and her name plate is in the case with the cane.

Regarding the Annual Bonfire, H. Brogna thanked the police, the firemen, the highway department, and the band stand committee. Although the June 30th, bonfire and concert were shortened, it was an excellent event with a big turnout.
He also thanked Police Officer Charon, the West Brookfield Police and mutual aid that assisted in the quick work on that recent breaking entering.
Took care of business quickly. Thank you. Thank you.

H. Brogna listed several items that will be worked on as follows:

1. Updating the 2003 Personnel Handbook
2. Centralizing Operations through Town Hall
3. Purchasing through the Main Office
4. Keeping the Public Updated via Live Broadcasting of Meetings

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00PM

Board of Selectmen, Chair