

Minutes of the Selectmen's Meeting

December 16, 2025

Members Present: Lynn Sweet, Chair; R. Stephen Leighton, Brian Monahan

Others Present: Ellen White, Administrator; Sonja Smith, Minutes Keeper

In Attendance: Cindy Gale; Dan Howard, Building Inspector; Steve Johnson, Fire Chief

The meeting was called to order at 5:30PM. The minutes of the November 18th meeting were read and approved. Two notices of pay rate for the Fire Department were reviewed and approved. The initial form for the equalization ratio was reviewed and signed.

The Board reviewed information on new State legislation regarding Veterans' credits. This issue will be addressed on the warrant at Town Meeting.

The Fire Department's budget was discussed at length. The Board expressed concern and requested more information be provided by the Fire Chief on the requests made.

The conversation on the Fire Department's budget led to recent talks with a property owner that may be willing to sell their land to the Town for the future Fire Station. Not knowing what the land would be worth, Lynn Sweet made a motion, seconded by Brian Monahan, to have the land appraised. A unanimous vote was taken. The land will be appraised using money out of the Capital Reserve Fund. Depending on that outcome, a warrant article would be written for the Town to consider purchasing the land at Town Meeting.

A report was given on SB-281. As of July 1, the Town can no longer prohibit building on a Class VI road. The property owner would have to sign a liability waiver acknowledging that the Town will not maintain the road nor provide any services on said road or have any responsibility for losses or damage caused by lack of services. All responsibility falls on the applicant only. Before any type of building permit is issued, the property owner must provide proof of waiver being recorded at the Registry of Deeds and the lot and any building is insurable. The Planning Board has requested the Board of Selectmen communicate with the Planning Board if an application for building is submitted. The Board agreed to table this discussion for a future meeting.

Cindy Gale met with the Board to submit a petition article. Her article requests that Whig Hill Road be opened up for safety concerns. A price to get the road up to Strafford standards was provided.

Recent concerns were brought to the Selectmen's attention on an abandoned property in Town. Several years ago, the Town paid to have it secured. At the Board's request, Building Inspector Dan Howard visited the property and gave a report to the Selectmen that there was no evidence of squatters and a few boards needed to be re-secured. A question on whether the Town can sell the property was discussed briefly. It was determined that the previous owner had passed several years ago with no heirs apparent. There would be a legal process to selling. The Selectmen were in agreement to have the boards re-secured and signs posted for now.

Being contacted by the Town's Administrator, Fire Chief Johnson was in attendance at the Board's invitation to review his proposed 2026 budget and subsequent requests. Questions on personnel and

shift coverage were asked and answered, ensuring those that visit the Fire Station and are not scheduled are not being paid to visit.

Chief Johnson asked to use money out of the Department's current year budget for 20 coats at a cost of \$6,000. Maintenance items for Ambulance 1 were discussed at length. Knowing these repairs could be quite costly, the Board agreed those repairs be the priority and denied the request to purchase coats from the Fire Department's regular budget.

Regarding the Fire Department's 2026 budget, concerns were raised regarding an extra warrant article to fund a capital reserve account. Chief Johnson agreed with the Board to remove that request.

A letter to the Hill Library's new bank was signed allowing the usage of the Town's EIN.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting will be January 6, 2026.

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made, seconded, and voted on to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:32PM.