

**TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN**

**WILLIAMSTOWN SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**DATE JANUARY 12, 2026 – PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING**

**DRAFT**

**PRESENT:** LARRY HEBERT, CLAYTON WOODWORTH, COTE GRIGGS, SCOTT MCCARTHY, TYLER MITCHELL

**ALSO PRESENT:** BARBARA GRAHAM, GORDON PIRIE, JENNIFER ALLARD, MICHEAL MACASKILL, RICH TURNER, RICH CHALMERS, JASMIN COUILLARD, DANIEL M COUILLARD, LISA ST. LAWRENCE, DAVID TRACZYK, SHERRY RUSSELL, STEPHEN HARDACKER

**CALL TO ORDER:** LARRY HEBERT, CALLED THE PUBLIC HEARING: PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER REMOVAL- RAMA SCHNEIDER TO ORDER AT 6:31 P.M.

Larry opened the hearing stating that during the month of December (2025) that the town staff (Barbara and May) had been contacted by James Ehlers, Chief of Staff, Office of the Vermont Lieutenant Governor questioning who to communicate with regarding behavior unbecoming of an appointed public official. They pointed James to my attention after which he received an email from James stating that he had numerous emails from a member of the Planning Commission personally attacking the Lieutenant Governor for his political party affiliation. The email stated that the Lieutenant Governor had personally reached out to the individual to ameliorate the situation; however, he only seemed to be emboldened to continue his verbal and written assaults. The situation had been going on for about 10 months, was a waste of time and resources, and unbecoming to a public official. James was reaching out to see whether the situation could be addressed and might be productive; otherwise, he would continue to document and file reports with the Capitol Police in case the individual crossed another line. Larry's response was that he agreed that behavior such as this was unbecoming of someone representing our town and to have the individual's name provided to him directly. At this point Larry received three (3) emails and was expecting approximately nine (9) more. Larry read each of the emails.

The first of the three (3) emails goes back to April 11, 2025 that Rama sent to the Lieutenant Governor which stated: Yup, Rodgers, you are what I thought you are – a perfect fit for the only Vermont political party to provide special dispensation to a proven and unrepentant rapist, proven and unrepentant business fraud, proven and unrepentant serial liar, and proven and unrepentant traitor to our nation -all so you're freely chosen VTGP could push the rapist to be President of our United States. Actions, Rodgers, actions. You and your buddy Scott are pathetic cowards willing to sell off our constitutional government for some idealized 1990s era agenda.

The second email, dated May 20, 2025, addressed to Vermont General Assembly, stated: wasn't long ago that, as imperfect as we were as a nation, democracy and person freedoms were the hallmarks of United States foreign policy. Likewise, it wasn't that long ago that women retained the individual right to bodily autonomy. A short lived five months ago our climate crisis and our grandkids realistic shot at a free, healthy, and sustainable future was a national priority. Not long ago, the federal and many states put emphasis on updating our nation's infrastructure. And much more. It all ended when the likes of the VTGOP put their hearts and faith in a proven and unrepentant rapist, business fraud, serial liar, and obvious traitor to our nation (Trump) and pushed the rapist to be President of our United States. As it turned out, the vile, hateful, violent, racist, bigoted, authoritarian agenda of the rapist Trumps' GOP/VTPCO managed to gain full control of our federal government, and they have turned this government against American. The only possibly response to this is actual state level action -note that action doesn't mean proclamations; but unfortunately, we're stuck with a Governor who counsels us to avert our gaze, cover our ears, and shut the f&\*&% up, and a Lt Governor who apparently agrees with that advice. You are the folks who are in positions to force the state to take action. Please do so.

The last of the submitted emails was dated for December 13, 2025, from Rama Schneider: message: Lying sack of S\*&% rapist, bigot, authoritarian Trump puts it all on display. Meanwhile VT Gov "what would you supposed I should do?" remains in cowardly and servile silence. VT Lt Gov Rodgers told me straight up he had found his home in the rapist's wholly owned GOP/VTGOP.

Larry explained that at the Selectboard meeting of Monday, December 22, 2025 four (4) members were present and the 5<sup>th</sup> one was aware of the situation; they chose to enter Executive Session following which; a letter was sent out: Rama Schneider, based on the rived recent information received regarding the on-going verbal attacks on our Lieutenant Governor, Governor, and President - approximately twelve (12) over the last ten (10) months; your appointment on the Williamstown Planning Commission by vote of the Selectboard is hereby rescinded. Freedom of speech and political disagreement are part of our democracy; however, the beforementioned actions have breached the code of ethics training that you have completed. These actions have gone way beyond that and have no place for anyone on commissions representing our town. Sincerely, Larry Hebert, Selectboard Chair.

At this point Larry opened the floor to Rama; who reiterated that he wholeheartedly stood behind his statements; they might not be liked in how they were said or that they were said but he meant every intent of them. He understood that the Selectboard has the right to rescind an appointment without cause; and a reason doesn't have to be given. He wasn't going to debate whether the Selectboard could remove him at will; he was insulted by the reason given for the removal. He mentioned that that the Vermont's Municipal Code of Ethics disallows four (4) items: conflicts of interest – or appearance of conflict of interest, using one's municipal position, municipal property or municipal personnel for personal gain, improper professional treatment, and accepting or soliciting gifts with the intent of a gift as to influence municipal official actions. He stated that nothing in the Code of Ethics policy addresses how he decided to speak to the Lieutenant Governor.

He wanted to make sure that he was on record for who he is; because sometimes only bad reputations are remembered: married 38 years, tax paying citizen since 13, served 7 years in the US military, moved to Vermont in 1981, lived in Williamstown 34 years, volunteers at the Ainsworth Public Library, substitute teacher for the local elementary, middle and high schools – a couple of years, assisted in vote counting and ballot transportation, watered downtown flowers, served on EC Fiber Committee and EC Fiber board – communication districts, assisted in food preparation and wash up at local church suppers, served as Williamstown Historical Society President, served as Williamstown and Paine Mountain School District board, Chaired Williamstown ATV road use committee, served 13 years as the treasurer and on the Williamstown Food Shelter, and most recently served on the Williamstown Planning Commission.

He's proven that he has spent his years in Williamstown showing that he is loyal. He has fidelity to his town, his neighbors, and his community. He's spent his time in Williamstown raising his daughter who also lives in town. He assists those who need help and has accepted help despite times of disagreement, sometime big disagreements because that is what fidelity looks like. He didn't think the way he chose to speak to the Lieutenant Governor represented Williamstown in a negative manner; not calling people out for doing what they're doing when you think it's destructive of what you feel is important is. He stated facts based on court cases and at least one opinion, but he still stood by them.

His biggest issue was how everything came about; nothing was said to him about there being an issue, he didn't get to state his side before a decision was put before the public. He wasn't invited to be in public prior to the rescission, so he requested space in public.

Larry spoke on behalf of the Selectboard for the reasons behind doing what was done. The agenda was posted stating they would be going into Executive Session for a Personnel Issue: the Planning Commission is part of personnel, Rama was being paid as a part of being on the Planning Commission, Rama represents the Town of Williamstown and the Planning Commission, the Selectboard didn't want to put Rama on display. Had the occurrence happened only once they could have said that someone was upset; due to the repeated occurrences something needed to be done.

There was discussion on the situation: Micheal MacAskill asked whether individuals have been invited into Executive Session when working with a Personnel Issue in the past, which the answer was yes - depending on the situation. Cote mentioned that the reason for his running for Selectboard was because he wanted to see people treat others in a much more respectful manner. He spent his time working with the youth in town and wanted to promote constructive, encouraging and positive interactions. He said that his personal opinion was that if you are in a public office you are held at a higher standard; we have our personal opinions, we just need to be careful of how they're expressed – especially if it's in a habitual manner. Jasmin mentioned that VLTC puts out a Selectboard Handbook; it's very helpful.

The hearing was concluded at 7:00 p.m. with no change in decision.

**CALL TO ORDER:** LARRY HEBERT, CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 7:01 P.M.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**SET THE AGENDA:** CLAYTON made a motion to set the agenda; accepting it as written, Tyler, seconded; so, moved.

**REVIEW OF OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**SELECTBOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT(s):** None

**COMMISSIONS / COMMITTEES / TRUSTEES / EMERGENCY SERVICES REPORTS / OTHER BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS:** None

**APPROVE WARRANTS:** Tyler recused himself due to Fire Department items on both SB175 and SB176. Clayton made motion to approve, Cote seconded; so, moved.

**PAYROLL WARRANTS:** The warrants were voted on separately because Cote had to recuse himself from being on warrant 12/14/2025 and the same for Tyler on warrant 12/28/2025. Neither of them had to recuse themselves for the warrant of 1/11/2026. Clayton made motion to approve the three warrants, Scott seconded; so, moved.

**APPROVE SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES:** Scott made motion to approve all minutes from the previous two meetings dated: 12/08/2025 and 12/22/2025, Clayton seconded; so, moved.

Discussion: Tyler found a couple of typos; Larry Hebert asked Tyler if he would mind meeting with either the Town Manager or May prior to Selectboard meetings to review the minutes for typos since he was good at picking up grammatical errors. Tyler agreed that he would do that.

**TOWN MANAGERS REPORT:** Ryan reported that his first week on board went well; it consisted of making introductions to people and systems, taking a road trip with Larry to get a feel for the roads and how the town was laid out, and figuring out how typical day-to-day operations went. He gave an update that the Meadow Street demolition project had been tentatively scheduled between Wednesday, January 14, 2026, and Tuesday, January 27, 2026, and both regular and Certified Letters were sent out to abutting parcel owners. The project might not have total completion until Spring since we have snow on the ground and there is landscaping to be done.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Gordon Pirie of the Billtown Wheelers was present to ask for permission to have the same access and abilities as last year as there are no changes. Discussion revolved around the acknowledgment that the club members have been respectful of land and roadways; the Selectboard hasn't been given notice of any negative feedback. Scott made the motion that the Billtown Wheelers have the same permissions as previous years, Clayton seconded; so, moved.

Ryan presented the six bids received from the RFP for forensic audit. As he opened each one he commented on each:

1. CLA – Clifton Larson Allen LLP: proposal includes a preliminary audit and forensic audit. They didn't do a break-down of each; and capped the amount at \$25,000.00.
2. PKF O'Connor Davies: estimated preliminary audit at \$25,000.00 and a timeframe of 4 to 7 weeks to conduct; didn't give estimate for a forensic audit.
3. C Lewis & Company: didn't provide an itemization of either preliminary or forensic audit; they provided hourly rates for their partners, some of whom make \$900.00/hr. No itemization of timeframe.
4. CBIZ Forensic Consulting Group: didn't provide an itemization of either preliminary or forensic audit; they listed hourly rate and estimated timeframe for each: preliminary audit is roughly \$100K and forensic audit is \$250K; both together would be about \$350K.
5. Wipfli Advisory: preliminary audit estimated at \$17,500 for 3 weeks; no forensic audit.

6. Bonadio Group: preliminary audit estimated at \$55K for 5 weeks; estimated forensic audit at \$165K unknown timeframe. They would cap it at \$220K.

Discussion revolved around: the differences in received bid amounts and length of time each audit type; acknowledgment of extra cost for town staff to assist the hired firm to conduct their audit, if it were to be proven that there were lost funds - whether the Town of Williamstown be able to recoup lost funds. It was reiterated again that the Town of Williamstown has procedures in place to safeguard funds; the Town Manager doesn't have control of funds. If someone was to pay toward their balance; delinquent or not, and it wasn't credited they would get a bill letting them know of an outstanding balance. In the end the Town of Williamstown would have to pay for: the preliminary audit, the forensic audit, and the extra hours for staff for their part out of the taxes generated. It was decided that an article would be put on the ballot at Town Meeting Day as originally voted. It was decided that a letter would be drafted and sent out to the taxpayers with information provided and the rough estimates of the impact on taxes. It was also discussed that there was a Special Selectboard Meeting scheduled for Monday, January 19, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall to go over this year's financial audit with the current auditor so that he could go over his reported findings in a question-and-answer session.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Larry provided a review of the discussion that happened at the Selectboard meeting on December 22, 2025, regarding the Budget. There were few changes from last year with an overall increase of 5.23%, which given inflation, is quite reasonable. Discussion mainly revolved around the wage increase of the Town Employees, how the Administrative Assistants' pay is broken down between multiple departments, and the titling of line items due to the Listers being voted out at last year's Town Meeting. To make the necessary correction; Clayton made the motion to change the wording and name of "Town Listers" to "Town Assessor" and to accept the budget with the changes made. Tyler seconded; so, moved.

Larry opened the topic the Road Rehab Bond with mentioning the Highway Budget. He mentioned that there was a need for a new truck; that same vehicle 5 years ago cost 100K less. He suggested setting aside \$10K from the Road Rehab Bond to Highway Equipment Reserve. Cote made the motion as amended to move the \$10L from the bond payment to the equipment reserve and leave everything else as is. Clayton seconded; so, moved. Tyler commented that the math is a 6.81% increase from last year's budget which includes the proposed Road Rehab Bond that will be presented to get voted to have the taxes reduced.

Again, Larry provided a review of the Road Rehab Bond discussion from the previous meeting. The biggest dilemma that the town faces is that the want for smooth roads is great; however, it's hard to reach the goal between multiple factors: some roads have so little material that there isn't anything left to grade and each year money is put into the roads; about \$160K which has been working, however we won't be able to catch up with any significant difference. Research was done and it the proposal for a Road Rehab Bond was proposed after talking with the former Town Manager and the Road Foreman. The following roads will be addressed first: Flint Road, Tower Rd, George Rd, Martin Rd, Chelsea Road, Baptist Street, and South Hill. If funds, materials, and time allows then additional roads will be done as well: Ferno Road and Cold Spring. Larry stressed that it would take about two (2) months with the road crew working on this project and nothing else with the assistance of hiring a couple of outside trucks and pieces of equipment. Doing it this way we could keep the budget for the project down to a million dollars. Stephen Hardaker asked about Lighthouse Rd; Larry asked him to be patient, letting them get the highly trafficked roads addressed first and he would make sure it would be addressed.

Discussion: Best rate for this project was through Vermont Bond Bank which will cost us 2.9% for 10 years; total cost in interest will be \$140, 215 which equates to roughly \$14,000.00 a year. This amount of spending will need to go on an Australian Ballot at Town Meeting.

Both the Preliminary Audit / Forensic Audit and the Road Rehab Bond will have articles on this year's Ballot at Town Meeting Day. Cote made the motion to have Ryan draft two letters; one for the audit and one for the road rehab project that will inform taxpayers before Town Meeting Day vote. No decisions made at this time, this topic will be readdressed at the January 19, 2026, Selectboard Meeting with a review of the proposed letters.

Micheal MacAskill asked the Selectboard to investigate the ditching at Gilbert and Erskine Roads near the Jarvis farm. It's roughly 3 feet deep and abruptly stops without a culvert; when it fills up it runs along the road.

**AROUND THE TABLE:** Larry wanted to take the time to thank Barb, Jenn, May and the former Town Manager; each one of them did what they said they were going to do to help through the transition period. The first couple of weeks was crazy, but everyone worked together, and they worked with me to keep things smooth; and Cote to keep the IT side of things running smoothly.

ADJOURN: Cote made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m., Clayton seconded the motion; so, moved.

Respectfully Submitted,

May Edson



LARRY HEBERT



COTE GRIGGS



TYLER MITCHELL



SCOTT MCCARTHY



CLAYTON WOODWORTH