

TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN

WILLIAMSTOWN SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2026 – PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

DRAFT

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

ALSO PRESENT: HORACE DUKE, HELEN DUKE, AMY GILBERT, JEN GILBERT, SHARI RUSSELL, STEVEN HARDAKER, RICH TURNER, DAVID DANFORTH, MARIE GRAHAM, WILLIAM GRAHAM, ANDREA HAYNES, REUBEN MACMARTIN, RYAN LOCKWOOD, MAY EDSON

CALL TO ORDER: LARRY HEBERT, CHAIRPERSON, CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 7:00 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SET THE AGENDA: Tyler made the motion to set the agenda with the following amendments: add payroll 09/11/2026 as well as Bryan Foster - Rood Pond Parcel proposal, Clayton seconded. So, moved.

REVIEW OF OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

SELECTBOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS: Larry welcomed a new business to town, Embers on Route 14; he said that it was great food and hoped that they did well.

Cote made the announcement that the Williamstown Youth Sports Association will be holding events for the next three weekends at Saldi Field: Saturday, September 19, 2026, 3rd/4th grade jamboree, the following Saturday, September 26, 2026, 1st/2nd grade jamboree, and on Saturday, October 3, 2026, 5th/6th grade jamboree. The field has lights, scoreboard, extra parking, and kids love it. All are welcome.

Larry wanted to make sure that the community was aware that on the first Monday of each month the Fire Department would be testing the air raid siren at the firehouse during their meeting to ensure its functioning capability. Should it go off at any other time; know that it is an emergency.

PUBLIC COMMENT(S):

COMMISSIONS / COMMITTEES / TRUSTEES / EMERGENCY SERVICES REPORTS / OTHER BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS:

APPROVE WARRANTS: SB22205, SB22206, SB22207, SB22208, SB22211 and SB22212: Clayton made the motion to approve, Scott seconded; so, moved. SB22209: Cote made the motion to pay as adjusted with the removal of the \$814.99 Granite mailbox post as standard amount is \$45.00; bringing the new balance on the Warrant to be \$80,424.74. Scott seconded; so, moved. SB22210: Tyler recused himself due to Fire Department items on the warrant. Clayton made the motion to approve, Scott seconded; so, moved.

PAYROLL WARRANTS: 08/23/2026: Cote recused himself due to being on the warrant. Tyler made the motion to approve, Scott seconded; so, moved. 09/06/2026: Tyler recused himself due to being on the warrant. Clayton made the motion to approve, Scott seconded; so, moved. 09/11/2026: Tyler made the motion to approve, Clayton seconded; so, moved.

APPROVE SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES: 08/10/2026: Tyler made the motion to accept the meeting minutes as written. Clayton seconded; so, moved.

TOWN MANAGERS' REPORT: Ryan reported that he has started working on next year's budget. He started with the Water and Sewer Department. At this time there looks to be a \$44,000 increase as Simon Operations has increased their base charges. Previously, they offered 5-year fixed rate contracts to municipalities; which are no longer offered. However, they now offer a five-year fixed contract with a 2.5% inflation rate each year. Part of the \$44,000 increase originates from the Town not adjusting the rates during the previous 5-year fixed contract periods. He has been working with Allen to see which areas within the budget can be adjusted to make the rate increases as small as possible.

Ryan reported that we will soon start using a new credit card processing company called Deluxe as the previous processor was going to start charging us a \$500 monthly fee in addition to the 2.85% per transaction fee. The benefits of going with Deluxe are receiving two free card processing terminals, a lower per transaction fee of 2.35%, as well as no monthly fee.

An update on the Baptist Street Culvert Project; they have completed erecting the concrete footings, as well as the stem walls. At this time, they are looking at a completion date of October 1st versus the original date of October 8th.

The Graniteville Road / Pirie Road paving project will begin in mid-October. An update will be provided when a solid start date is received from Pike industries. Another RFP will be going out for the Construction Hill and Chelsea Road paving projects. Due to the timeliness of those another Selectboard meeting might be needed to keep everything in pace for this paving year.

We have hired a new maintenance person for the Public Safety Building and the Town Hall. Valerie DuBois started last week of August; and has been doing a fantastic job.

In December, the State Police had confiscated the computer that was used by the former Town Manager; and now that the case has been closed, it has now been returned.

The current delinquent tax total is \$29,444; we have collected \$997 since last update. Unfortunately, this has been the worst month for collections. Ryan reported that he has been contacting people who have missed payments according to their agreements on file. The new tax bills will be sent out this week after we set the rates tonight.

Current delinquent utility total is \$55,072. We have recovered \$10,661 since the last meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: Williamstown Sidewalk Project Presentation with DuBois and King: Andrea Haynes, landscape architect of DuBois and King presented on the Sidewalk Feasibility Study which is a requirement of V-Trans and has the goal of investigating a project area and examines conceptual design alternatives with public input working with Ruben MacMartin of the central Vermont Regional Planning Commission and the Town of Williamstown.

The purpose of the study was to develop alternative pedestrian routes connecting the Williamstown schools and the village of Williamstown. As this is a multifaceted project, the connection between the two schools has been identified as highest priority over the secondary goal of connecting the schools to the village by either routes of Construction Hill or Brush Hill Road and Brook Street.

The presentation was broken down into three alternatives: alternative one - being between Brush Hill and Hebert Road connecting the two schools, alternative two - was broken into "option a" and "option b"; with "option a" being the south side of Construction Hill Road and "option b" being the north side of Construction Hill Road, alternative three – also broken into two options; "option a" being Brook Street and Brush Hill Road, and "option b" being Brook Street and Brush Hill Road and Memorial Park.

Alternative One - Brush Hill Road and Hebert Road connection: strengths - reduces walking in the Road between the schools, physically separates pedestrians from vehicles, and has minimal utility impact with the exception of storm water drains. The challenges are minor to moderate slope challenges to the east side of the roads, removal of some trees is likely required on Brush Hill Road, and must stay within the right of way due to contamination of the UniFirst property.

Alternative Two – "Option A": strengths -follow the most direct routes that students currently take between the schools in the village, few driveway crossings and no river, less traffic versus Brook Street, and would provide an opportunity to repair storm during infrastructure. The challenges are -a lot of storm drain infrastructure that would need to be reconfigured, crosses Construction Hill Road three times, the crossing of Main Street and Meadow Street has a short sight distance due to roadway curves, and Construction Hill Road may be very steep as it approaches Main Street.

"Option B" which happens to be the preferred alternative of the study: strengths - follows the most direct route of students take between schools in the village, few driveway crossings and no river, less traffic versus Brook Street, would provide an opportunity to repair storm drain infrastructure, manages storm water before it enters the road. Challenges are - a lot of storm drain infrastructure would need to be

reconfigured, the crossings of Main Street at Meadow Street has a short sight distance due to roadway curves, and Construction Hill Road is very steep as it approaches Main Street.

Alternative Three – “Option A”: strengths - more gradual slope than Construction Hill, the slide slopes are relatively flat particularly along Brook Street, the intersection of Brook Street and Main Street are clear lines of sight, and no road crossings. Challenges - multiple driveway crossings along Brook Street, mailboxes and landscaping close to road, multiple utility poles, part of the route is within the river corridor and associated floodplain, crossings with Stevens Branch on Brush Hill would require a new vehicular or pedestrian bridge, the Stevens Branch on the south side of the Brook Street makes right-of-way relatively narrow.

“Option B”: Strengths - more gradual slope than Construction Hill, slide slopes are relatively flat particularly along Brook Street, and the Memorial Park portion of the route is not along the road and very safe. Challenges - multiple driveway crossings along Brook Street, mailboxes and landscaping close to the road (fewer than an Option 3-A), multiple utility poles, part of the route is within the river corridor and associated floodplain, crossing at Stevens Branch on Brush Hill Road would require a new vehicular or pedestrian bridge, limited site distance makes crosswalks potentially dangerous.

At this point in time the preliminary cost estimates for each one of the alternatives are as follows: alternative one - Hebert and Brush Hill Road is \$800,000, alternative 2A - Construction Hill Road south side is \$1.5 million, alternative 2B - Construction Hill Road north side is \$1.5 million, alternative 3A -Brush Hill and Brook Street is \$1.6 million, alternative 3B - Brush Hill/Brook Street / Memorial Park is \$1.6 million.

The required next steps of this project: have the Selectboard except the Feasibility Study, determine whether or not the Town should move any and/or all of the alternatives forward, coordinate with VTrans on additional requirements for full design and construction which would be a Full Scoping Study / Archaeological and Historic Resources Assessment.

There were several points brought up during the discussion about making sure that the placement of crosswalks maintained a safe distance from high traffic intersections, one of which being at the bottom of Construction Hill to Meadow Street. It was highly suggested that the crosswalk be placed closer to the Library on Route 14 to maintain a safe equidistance and line of sight between the intersections located at both Route 64 and Meadow Street. The necessity to not disrupt the preset storm drains that are put in place to work with the UniFirst property contamination was of utmost importance. There was a point in discussion where pedestrian flashers be put up in multiple areas where line of sight could be impeded upon. The importance that this project has multiple phases and is multi-year project was also stressed. Reuben MacMartin stated that funding opportunities for this project in its many phases may be found through both State and Federal levels with 20% match expectation, sometimes a 10% match but more expensive.

Cote made the motion to accept the Feasibility Study without an obligation to follow through with the project. Scott seconded. So, moved.

Bryan Foster - Rood Pond Parcel proposal: Brian Foster of 399 Rood Pond Road presented the board with a proposal of the possibility of purchasing 25 acres on the south side of the 65-acre lot that currently holds the two water towers for the town of Williamstown. He said that the reason for this was due to the proximity of the Town's parcel to his own; as part of his presentation, he mentioned that he wasn't sure if it would be developed in the future or left as vacant land.

Larry thanked him for coming forward with his proposal. He conveyed that typically when the Town decides to sell the piece of property they would need to make sure that all abutting landowners have the opportunity to purchase fairly. He also stated that he would have Ryan research into whether there are any ordinances in place that would restrict any kind of sale due to the way that the Town currently utilizes this particular piece of property.

Set the 26/27 Tax Rate: The anticipated tax rate for the coming year is a 4.2% increase over the last year. Budget proposed with a difference of 0.042% with school and Town. The proposed Municipal rate is .86030% for the 26/27 fiscal year. Tyler made the motion to accept the 0.86030% municipal rate for the 26/27 fiscal year. Scott seconded. So, moved.

Continuation of the Williamstown Fast Squad Discussion: At the beginning of this discussion, Tyler recused himself as a Selectboard member as he is also a member of the Williamstown Fire Department. Marie Graham, William Graham, and David Danforth all spoke

primarily on behalf of the topic. Marie Graham opened the topic of conversation saying that due to the lack of interest as well as lack of calls since year one, the Fast Squad membership has dwindled as prior members had chosen to seek other opportunities and is now down to basically just herself. She also stated later on in the discussion that the majority of calls that were being dispatched to the Fast Squad were lift assists which would fall under the purview of the Fire Department. In her opinion, one of the best things to do under the circumstances would be to train up the members of the Fire Department so that they have a better understanding of how to properly assist while waiting for the ambulance.

William stated that the possibility of the Fire Department overseeing the Fast Squad was presented to him. He felt that it shouldn't be just his decision as it would have an impact on the whole of the Fire Department and therefore requested a meeting. Those members who chose to attend voted "yes" 14 to 1 to pursue the Fire Department overseeing the Fast Squad utilizing the active members in the Fire Department after he explained the expectations for this undertaking. It was stressed that additional training would be needed to fulfill the Fast Squad requirements. William stated that he then asked those who were interested in being part of the process to sign their names to the statement so that it could be brought to the Selectboard; of which he had a list of 12 names. He admitted when the idea was proposed originally it didn't have a strong backing; however, after quite a bit of time had passed and it became apparent that there could be a loss of the Fast Squad to the community he felt that it was worth the conversation. William stated that the members feel that they are there to support the community at large and agree that it would benefit of the Town to assist in any capacity they can when Barre Town EMS is out of the area, working on a call, or on a transfer. He stated that it would be better for the Fire Department to show up on a scene with adequately trained members who could provide medical assistance until an ambulance service was able to arrive versus not being able to assist when time is precious. William stated that if the Selectboard was to approve the Fast Squad becoming part of the Fire Department that there need to be expectations laid out between the Barre Town EMS and Fire Department and the Selectboard in order to ensure the success of the decision. He does not want to see any member of any department feel like they have done their best to complete all expectations and find they do not have the support of follow-through on conditions that are beyond their control.

Tyler stated that he researched how 911 emergency calls are dispatched in Vermont. Initially, all calls are routed into one data center and then based on the location of the incident as well as whether there are injuries involved. Calls are then funneled down into a more localized dispatching center. The types of services dispatched is based on protocols set in place dependent on the answers to strategic questions asked within the first moments of a 911 call taking into consideration the active resources available to the dispatcher.

William stated that he has been working with David Danforth and together they both agree that the off-scene communication has been gradually getting better. There's been times that Barre Town EMS ambulance gets called to an accident and then the Fire Department is not too far behind. William stated that within the last couple of weeks he had been questioned why there was a delay in the Fire Department's response time in comparison to the Barre Town EMS; however, when he looked over the data for the call it was due to the 2-minute delay in dispatching. He said that the Fire Department has been vigilant in making sure that all their radios have been programmed accordingly. He said that there have been multiple times where in trying to reach Barre Town EMS no response had been provided and later found out that medics do not carry portable radios. He said that this communication loss creates concerns not only for the safety of the emergency personnel but also for scene back-up support. At this point he and David Danforth are working on strengthening on-scene communications as there was a recent incident that happened locally when one of his Fire Department members, the Incident Commander in particular, was on scene was asking for clarification of a need while standing amongst a group of medics as to whether or not an emergency procedure needed to be satisfied; and instead of communicating directly to the Incident Commander the other individual contacted the dispatch center which then contacted the Incident Commander which provided needless delay at a critical moment.

Marie stated that she feels that it may create better communication between Barre City Dispatch if there are fewer singular departments in Williamstown and the creation of one entity as in the past Barre City Dispatch didn't know whether to call the Fire Department or the Fast Squad and in some cases didn't call either.

Larry expressed his concern for the members of the Fire Department in terms of getting burnt out when the Fire Department has been working diligently on building a good number of very good, young, and energetic members who when in comparison to other towns are

having a hard time getting any kind of volunteers to fulfill their Fire Department's needs. He wants to see everybody succeed across the board, but he fears that there is a probability of burnout when taking on extra duties.

William stated that he understood where Larry was coming from; however, he felt that members primarily join the Fire Department because they genuinely wish to help others, they gain camaraderie and have fun which makes things better. They consider it their job to make someone else's worst day a little bit better; they want to simply help people in the community. He admitted that he was surprised by the amount of support he received from some of the people that put their names down on the list, but it comes down to helping community. He holds the members to a standard and they know what is required of them. They want to have the opportunity to do what they can. William asked the Selectboard to consider giving the Fire Department the opportunity of a year to show what they can do with having the Fast Squad under their care; and if they don't hold up their end of the agreement then revisit the conversation in September 2027. William isn't expecting that they are going to get a large influx of calls; but he would like to see opportunities for improvement, growth, and support between the departments. He also wanted it on the record that originally he argued against having the Fire Department assisting in lift assists; however, after personally seeing cases where people could've had faster service had they been there to help he reconsidered his stance. He said that his part of the process will be purely in an administrative capacity: making sure people are following through on what they're signing up for and training. He will delegate the operations of the Fast Squad: working with David, adequate trainings are held, ensuring supplies are on hand at minimum. He gave his word that he would do all that he can to see that agreed upon expectations are held to. He fully agrees that Barre Town EMS are the medical professionals and the Fast Squad under the Fire Department is acting in an assistive capacity.

Larry asked whether would be possible to stay within the \$12,000 budget for the call assists. William said that he believes that that would be sustainable for this coming year. He's just asking for a year to try things. Marie stated that the Fast Squad still has quite a bit of supplies on hand that aren't expired; certain items would need to be replaced. She also stated that the Fast Squad State License expires in December 2026; the Passport Assembly would be expired should the Fire Department not take over the Fast Squad. She would like to see that the Fire Department take it on, and she would still continue to be an active member. One of the downsides of the recruiting process for the Fast Squad is the fact that people do not want to become active members and do not receive any calls to fulfill the position. Especially when the Fire Department's going to be called anyway. David replied to the question by saying that the Town's going to see no additional expense on any of the motor vehicle crashes or fires - going to be a wash as far as the labor goes because they're already going. Amy Gilbert said that as a resident, that she didn't feel that a \$12,000 budget should be a deciding factor on whether the Fast Squad continues under the Fire Department as she thinks that if they're willing to take it on, they should absolutely do it. As the Town shouldn't be without them. Steven Hardaker agreed as a taxpayer that the two departments become one entity.

David spoke on behalf of the Barre Town EMS, He stated since January 2024, just under 1450 911 calls have been handled with average time of 8 minutes and 9 seconds. There were two cardiac arrests in the last 18 months in Williamstown; both of those patients are still alive. Barre Town EMS invests heavily in technology and have auto pulses on trucks; if a patient is in cardiac arrest, they get put on a machine and that machine does the compressions for us. He would never talk a Town out of taking care of people in their own community because there is the chance of unknowns; if they have the option to do so, then go for it. Equipment can be exchanged, extra equipment can be provided if the Fire Department was to take it on, and they have the capacity to handle the further training and education. David said that he's seeing a downward trend of struggling Fast Squads in the area; however, seen successes with combining the entities. He suggested William create a call signup with two or three people helping per call when the Fire Department combines entities to facilitate smoother communications. His opinion was that by becoming one entity better training opportunities and inter-departmental communications could be provided. He said that the Barre Town EMS purchased a transport unit that works 12 hours a day primarily handling non-essential transports for the majority of the time.

David reported that there have been improvements to the local communications systems recently. The Town of Barre spent around half a million dollars upgrading our towers for their Simulcast system. So now we have two towers in town which allows for better communications especially with portable devices now in contrast to three months ago. It is anticipated that these changes could shorten our average time frames as they are no longer one way only. He will ask the medics to be diligent in taking portable devices with them more often as in the past often times they wouldn't work. He also stated that Vermont in the next year or two, hopefully sooner, will be upgrading communication systems, a statewide CAD system or computerized dispatching, which will go to great lengths to solve decade

old problems in Vermont of emergency communication. Communication challenges are not isolated to Barre Town or Williamstown; it's a statewide problem. The State has just invested \$11 million in a statewide task force to look at all these issues because it's been such an issue we're hopeful that that's going to go a long way. William mentioned that the idea of entering some spaces without portables is no longer always safe due to today's possible situations.

As the discussion progressed many strong points were brought up and addressed. Cote stated that as someone who works with volunteers on a consistent basis stated that he didn't see the harm in letting the Fire Department oversee the Fast Squad as there was an opportunity the Town had another year with extra help and maybe some lives saved for really no additional cost. He would like to see what the 14 people who supported the opportunity can do. Tyler suggested that should it be decided than an agreement or a standard operating guideline should be drawn up; or something similar to what EMTs have to follow for protocols; Larry agreed to the suggestion of protocols be put in place and enforced keeping in mind that there is to be no competition with Barre Town EMS and keeping proper control of each department; as the Town doesn't wish to alienate themselves from the original and/or current agreement with Barre Town EMS. Other requests were made: each department keep a copy of their own records and reporting quarterly updates to the Selectboard. Clayton agreed with all suggestions and requests. Cote requested to be able to view the protocols once they have been drawn up.

David addressed the pending licensing expiration that Marie brought up saying that as the Director of Barre Town EMS and the District-6 Chair he knew that there was only 16 days to get the relicensing application in and that the State was aware that a meeting would be held on this topic. He said that the simplest and easiest process for the licensing line would be for the Town to merge the two departments together with the Town of Williamstown Fire Department and Fast Squad as one entity. He referred to the beforementioned protocol/operating guidelines as being called an Operational Letter of Agreement that has to be written between the transporting entity and first entity that goes with the license which can be written out. It goes to the State as well as the Selectboard.

After hearing all sides and understanding that there was unanimous willingness to a year trial; Larry asked for a vote. Scott made the motion to move the Fast Squad under the authorization of the Fire Department under the management of Fire Chief. Clayton seconded. So, moved.

Larry wished them all good luck and said that he really hopes that all works out. He also thanked everyone for coming and having a civil discussion because it always works better if it's civil.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

AROUND THE TABLE: None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 1 V.S.A. SECTION 313 – IF NEEDED

ADJOURN: Tyler made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 p.m.. Scott seconded; so, moved.

Respectfully Submitted,

May Edson

LARRY HEBERT

COTE GRIGGS

TYLER MITCHELL

SCOTT MCCARTHY

CLAYTON WOODWORTH