

10-06-2025 Selectboard Meeting

Meeting minutes

Call to Order

The Grand Isle Selectboard meeting was called to order by Jeff Parizo at 6:00 PM on Monday, October 6, 2025.

Board Members Present: Jeff Parizo, Ellen Howrigan, Jennifer Morway, Ronnie Bushway, Aimee Cochran

Community Members Present: Sue Lawrence, Emily Clark, Colleen Bushway, Jean Prouty, Lucille Campbell, Melissa Boutin, Carrie San Angelo

Community Members via Zoom: Lynda Morgan Gardiner, Paul Hansen with Ecopixel

Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

No amendments to the agenda were proposed.

Public Comment

The Board acknowledged concerns about the ferry. Chair Parizo noted there had been an accident at the ferry docks but clarified that this issue falls outside the town's jurisdiction and is under the federal Department of Transportation. Selectperson Morway emphasized that anyone wanting to file complaints should do so through the state or Department of Transportation, as the Town of Grand Isle has no jurisdiction over ferry operations. The ferry was reportedly having issues with low water affecting loading and unloading of vehicles.

Review and Approve Minutes

Lucille Campbell (community member) expressed concern that meeting minutes posted online didn't indicate they were draft minutes until approved. She specifically noted that incorrect information about the Historical Society had been posted in the September minutes.

Carrie (Selectboard Administrator) explained that meeting minutes are automatically posted to the website through ClerkMinutes (AI transcription service) without a "draft" designation. She confirmed that corrections are made in real-time once approved at meetings. Board members discussed the importance of accurate minutes and agreed to look into adding a "draft" designation to minutes that haven't been approved yet.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve the minutes of September 15, 2025, with corrections. Seconded by Ron Bushway Motion carried unanimously.

Review and Sign Warrants

The Board discussed a question about how to categorize an outdoor trash can purchased for the library—whether it should be classified under building repairs and maintenance or as a library expense. After discussion, the Board determined that as a town building expense, it should be categorized under supplies rather than repairs/maintenance.

Motion: Jennifer Morway moved to approve the warrants. Seconded by Jeff Parizo. Following discussion about expense categorization, the motion carried unanimously.

Financials

The Board reviewed end-of-year financial reports. Town Treasurer, Melissa Boutin, had prepared statements showing an unassigned fund balance of \$208,040.97 (after accounting for prepaid expenses) as of June 30. The Highway fund showed a strong balance of \$479,974.71, largely due to multiple grants received that weren't initially budgeted.

Jeff Parizo noted that the transfer station showed a positive cash flow of approximately 15% (sales minus costs divided by sales), with several new customers coming in regularly. Ellen Howrigan suggested the Board should consider a pay raise for transfer station workers during the upcoming budget process given its positive performance.

The Board discussed difficulties in reviewing financial reports in the short time before meetings and agreed to work with Melissa on developing a better process for financial review.

Highway Department Update

Applications for laying pipes and wires and Right-of-way Access: 221 E Shore N

Ron presented two applications for 221 East Shore North:

- An application for laying pipes and wires with a note from Road Foreman Steve indicating that no lines would go under the roadway.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve the application permit for laying pipes and wires at 221 East Shore North. Seconded by Jennifer Morway. Motion carried unanimously.

- A highway right-of-way access permit application for the same property, submitted by Sierra Bretton Pembroke. Steve had approved the application with conditions that the driveway must be put in by VTrans B-71 standards, with 4-foot minimum width, 1-foot radius, and a 15-inch culvert. Site distance was noted as good.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve the highway right-of-way access permit application for Sierra Bretton Pembroke at 221 East Shore North, Grand Isle. Seconded by Ellen Howrigan. Motion carried unanimously.

Ron provided additional highway department updates:

- Austin Menard started work today and signed the personnel policy
- Steve helped Alburgh with a cross culvert.
- The crew has started hauling winter sand
- Steve cleaned up debris at the old town garage site
- Truck #2 (tandem) was fixed with a new brake canister and the transmission leak was repaired
- The truck passed inspection at a cost of approximately \$850 at the new diesel mechanic shop at Cota's.

Culvert Policy

Ron explained that while the town doesn't have a formal culvert policy, the practice has been that when someone builds a house and gets a curb cut, they must buy the culvert, and after a year, the town takes over maintenance.

He noted that South Hero has a policy where property owners are responsible for replacing culverts if they get damaged. With increasing costs of culverts and the town's shift to using plastic rather than metal culverts (which corrode with road salt), Ron suggested implementing a formal policy.

The Board agreed to have Carrie research culvert policies from other towns, including South Hero, for consideration at a future meeting.

Buildings Facilities Manager Update

Ron reported:

- The handicap ramp at the town building was fixed
- Steve installed keypads on the town office locks last week
- Steve and Austin installed a new drop slot on the town office door
- Handicap door handles were installed on the new doors of the town office and Listers' office
- They have one key for the town office keypad but need to replace the keypad for the Listers' side as the key is missing

IT Update

No updates were provided.

New Business

Listers: Errors & Omissions

Sue presented the annual Vermont form EVR 4261-E for Vermont Transco LLC. The valuation for their transmission line on Branch Road changed from \$40,566,000 to \$40,574,700, a difference of \$8,700. Sue explained that in past years they hadn't assessed utility companies for personal property like communications equipment, but this year the state had someone revalue all utilities and determined this equipment should be included in assessments.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve the errors and omissions certificate for Vermont Transco LLC.
Seconded by Jennifer Morway. Motion carried unanimously.

Procurement Policy

This item was removed from the agenda.

Unfinished Business

Future Land Use Map Tier 1B Act 250 Jurisdiction Opt-in

The Board discussed confusion about which areas were included in the Act 250 jurisdiction opt-in. After reviewing maps, they clarified that they had approved opting in for just two areas: the village area and the Grand Isle Station area (314/Pearl Street). There was confusion about the Island Circle area, which the Board determined was not included in their approval.

The Board agreed to communicate this clarification to Catherine and Greta who had raised the question.

Town Charter: Timeline & Process

Jeff Parizo reported that after consulting with Carrie and the town attorney, they are planning for a charter vote at the regular town meeting in March rather than holding a special election in November. The process will begin January 22 with filing the charter with the Town Clerk and posting notice of the first hearing.

Jennifer asked when the Board needs to approve the final charter language. Jeff said he would consult with the town attorney to determine the timeline for finalizing the charter text.

Library Project

Chair Parizo reported that the builder was on site Friday meeting with several contractors, including dirt contractors and an electrician, to explain the bids and expectations.

Extensive discussion followed about challenges with the library project:

- Ron stated he was confused and concerned after the meeting Friday with Mike Connor. He stated he doesn't blame Mike Connor for being upset because even as a Selectboard member, he didn't know that the Selectboard was still collecting estimates from other contractors when the Selectboard had awarded the \$15,000 contract to Connor Construction.
- Jen Morway stated that Mike Connor was not hired as a GC, only for Pre-Construction Services, and Jeff Parizo stated that there is a fiduciary responsibility to the Town, and that getting other estimates for work is not conflicting with the limited scope of work that Connor Construction was approved to do for \$15,000.
- Ron also asked why the Town did not go with the design that was hanging up in the Town Office for years. Jeff agreed that we did have a plan that could have been revised, but stated that we could not go back and had to look forward. Jen Morway clarified that the previous design was too expensive to construct so many years later, and that the more recent design that everyone has been working from over the last year, came in drastically over budget. Further complicating things, the architects may not be stamping the plans.
- Chair Parizo acknowledged they were in a difficult position after receiving bids far exceeding the budget.
- Emily Clark, Planning Commission Chair, clarified that the \$15,000 was the only commitment made at that time, not a guarantee of being hired for construction.
- The Board noted discrepancies between the initial estimate and final price (about 70% higher), particularly with general conditions costs.
- Several Board members expressed concerns about the originally planned design elements like large storefront windows and an expensive heating system that wouldn't reflect the character of Grand Isle village or be financially sustainable for maintenance.

Chair Parizo said he would be consulting with the town attorney about concerns that the architect might not be stamping their work. Jennifer Morway suggested this might mean each subcontractor would stamp their portion instead of the architect stamping the overall design.

The Board agreed to continue pursuing bids while working with Connor to fulfill the current agreement.

Website Design

Aimee reported she had met with representatives from both EcoPixel and CivicPlus regarding website design. She noted that CivicPlus had advised against most add-ons except possibly AudioEye for ADA compliance, which would cost approximately \$2,400-2,500 per year.

Paul Hansen from EcoPixel confirmed they could add features later if needed and that the process would involve a committee of 2-3 town representatives working with them on design, structure, and content. The time commitment would be approximately 10-20 hours, primarily for meetings and decisions, with the biggest time investment being rewriting or creating missing content.

The Board decided Amy, Carrie, and possibly Adam, DRB Clerk, would form the committee to work with the website designers.

Motion: Aimee moved that the town select EcoPixel to build the town website at a cost of \$4,122 per year for three years, to be paid from earmarked IT funds. Seconded by Ellen Howrigan. Motion carried unanimously.

Job Descriptions: Zoning Administrative Officer & Job Opening: Zoning Administrative Officer

The Board determined the job description provided was not in the proper format and needed to be revised by the Planning Commission. However, they proceeded with approving posting the job opening since Scott (the current Zoning Administrator) plans to leave at the end of December and wants to train his replacement.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to post the Zoning Administrator job opening as soon as possible. Seconded by Ellen Howrigan. Motion carried unanimously.

Carrie was directed to post the opening online and in the Islander.

The Board had an extended discussion about who the Zoning Administrator reports to and who should interview candidates. They clarified that while the Planning Commission makes recommendations for hiring, the Zoning Administrator works for the Select Board, not the Planning Commission. They agreed that communication should flow between the Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, and Development Review Board regarding bylaw implementation and interpretation.

Radars Speed Signs

Aimee reported she met with Kyle from Northwest Regional Planning who offered to conduct a free speed sign study. North Hero is also looking into speed signs, so Kyle proposed conducting both studies simultaneously.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve conducting the speed study. Seconded by Amy Cochran. Motion carried unanimously.

Aimee will email Kyle to set up the study.

Junk Ordinance (tabled until 10/20/2025)

This item was tabled until the October 20, 2025 meeting.

Administrative Check-In

The Board confirmed that budget meetings will begin at the next regular meeting on October 20, 2025, with presentations from Rescue, Recreation Department, and Zoning. Melissa noted that Highway would present on December 1st as requested by Steve.

Board members discussed their individual action items:

- Aimee will make a personnel form fillable and send to Carrie to put on the website, email CivicPlus, contact EcoPixel about contracts, and email Kyle about the speed study
- Jeff will speak with David Rugh about several items and check the website for current use application
- Jennifer will email Ellen about the zoning administrator template and work with Scott and Melissa
- Carrie will research culvert policies from other towns

Adjournment

Motion: Ron Bushway moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ellen Howrigan. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 PM.