

10-20-2025 Selectboard Meeting

Meeting minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jeff Parizo opened the Grand Isle Selectboard meeting at 6:00 PM on Monday, October 20, 2025 at 9 Hyde Road, Grand Isle, VT.

Board members present: Jeff Parizo, Aimee Cochran, Ronnie Bushway, Ellen Howrigan, and Jennifer Morway. Community members present: Colleen Bushway, Susan Lawrence, Desiree Moore, Steve Moore, Melissa Boutin, Emily Clark, and Susan Willard. On Zoom: Esther Blow, Lynda Morgan Gardiner, Emily White, Lucille Campbell, Mike Franks, Megan (no last name provided), and MC (no name clarification provided)+.

Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

Chair Parizo announced several amendments to the agenda. Denise Douglas would not be present under public comment. Under unfinished business, the board would add credit card policy, round barn project, and old library roof project. The personnel policy item would remain in its current location on the agenda.

Public Comment

Mike Connor from Connor Construction arrived and was acknowledged by the board. He would be heard later in the meeting regarding the library project.

Review and Approve Minutes

The board discussed challenges with the new ClerkMinutes system and the difficulty of printing minutes from the website. Chair Parizo explained that he had to copy and paste the minutes to print them, and requested that once Carrie creates minutes in ClerkMinutes, she also post a PDF version on the town website for easier public access. The board agreed that draft minutes would be posted on the website, and after two meetings, older minutes would be removed, directing people to ClerkMinutes for archival access.

Due to board members not having sufficient time to review the minutes, they tabled approval of the October 6th regular meeting minutes and the special meeting executive session minutes to the next regular meeting.

Guests

No guests were scheduled for this portion of the meeting.

Review and Sign Warrants

The board reviewed and signed warrants.

Ellen Howrigan motioned to approve the warrants as presented. Ronnie Bushway seconded. The motion is approved unanimously.

Note: 3 Dodge Terrace was listed under warrants, but was not discussed at the meeting.

Financials

The board discussed two CDs maturing on October 22nd. The first was CD #1001 for approximately \$220,000 in library ARPA funds at North Country Credit Union. The second was CD #1009 for approximately \$61,000 in reappraisal funds.

For CD#1001, board members discussed the need for these funds to be readily available as the library project moved forward, particularly given the timing of grant reimbursements and large upcoming expenses.

"I make a motion to cash in CD number 1001 for \$220,000 thereabouts approximate and put it into our NSB checking account for the library project," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Jen Morway. The motion passed unanimously.

For CD#1009, the board discussed upcoming expenses including a recent \$9,000 bill from the reappraisal company. Sue Lawrence noted that the company was supposed to start work in September according to their contract but hadn't begun yet. After discussion about cash flow needs, the board decided to reinvest this CD.

"I make a motion that we take CD number 1009 for \$61,000 plus or minus and reinvest it into the North Country Credit Union for 6 months at approximately 3.8 percent APY," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ellen Howrigan. The motion passed unanimously.

ACH payment option for property taxes with M&T

Melissa Boutin reported that she was working on establishing ACH payment options for property tax payments. She had submitted required information to M&T Bank and hoped to have the system available by the January 31st tax deadline. The board agreed to revisit this at the second meeting in November.

Highway Department Update

Steve Moore presented the highway department update, beginning with discussion of the culvert policy. Ronnie Bushway opened by retracting his previous suggestion about making property owners responsible for culvert replacements after one year. He explained that after discussing with various people and considering recent culvert failures, he believed the town should continue its current policy where new homeowners buy their culvert when applying for a curb cut, and the town takes ownership and maintenance responsibility after one year.

The board discussed moving to plastic (HDPE) culverts exclusively going forward, specifically the heavy-duty gray type with smooth interiors. Steve noted they'd had two culvert failures in one week recently, emphasizing the need to increase the culvert budget. Board members agreed the current policy protected the town's interests in maintaining proper water flow and preventing situations where property owners couldn't afford necessary repairs.

Steve reported that the highway department had been preparing for winter, servicing equipment and hauling winter sand. He noted that salt prices had increased by \$12 per ton this year - a significant jump that would need to be reflected in next year's budget. The department typically uses about 140 tons annually, though they budget for 175 tons.

Truck #3 (the 2012) had passed inspection but needed some exhaust work. Truck #2 still had a transmission leak that was identified as a cracked tube, which the board had approved for repair.

Steve praised new employee Austin Menard, saying he was catching on well and had learned the plow routes. Steve would be on vacation from October 29th through November 12th, with per diem coverage arranged through Herbie for High Gate runs and Mike available as backup.

Regarding culvert work, Steve reported one replacement on Reynolds Road where a homeowner's paving contractor had installed a new culvert (with Steve's specifications), and another failed culvert on Hyde Road scheduled for replacement the next day.

Steve then presented information about purchasing an excavator. After researching options with at least five dealers, he found rental machines ranging from \$150,000 for used equipment. However, he located a 2017 Volvo 145 zero-turn excavator with 5,800 hours for approximately \$60,000 from a private seller in Essex who was retiring. The machine had recently had \$3,000 in track and undercarriage work completed 400 hours ago.

John had accompanied Steve to inspect the machine and both felt it was in good condition, though it would need about \$4,000-5,000 for a hydraulic thumb attachment and some bucket bushings.

The board discussed financing, confirming the highway department had sufficient funds in their balance (over \$333,000) plus CDs totaling over \$130,000. Steve emphasized the good value compared to dealer prices and the need to act quickly as other buyers were interested.

"I make a motion we approve \$59,500 for an excavator, a Volvo 145," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ronnie Bushway. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve also mentioned meeting with Better Roads grant representatives about updating the town's road inventory system. He was told the town should get an iPad to use with the state's mapping system, which would allow real-time road condition assessments. This would allow Steve to complete the inventory in-house as opposed to subbing it out to Northwest Regional. The iPad would be reimbursable through the grant. Board members suggested Steve first try using his iPhone with the system before purchasing an iPad. It was further discussed, and the board agreed to have Steve gather more information regarding reimbursement requirements for an iPad and if a monthly wireless plan would be needed for it and report back to the board.

Buildings Facilities Manager Update

The buildings facilities manager provided updates through the highway department presentation. Key items included: Vermont Compactor Service had replaced a critical hydraulic hose on the baler after a technician identified a dangerous leak. The town staff now knew how to depressurize the system. Additionally, a service technician would be at the town building Friday at 7:30 AM to work on the Lochinvar heating systems. The holding tank at the Hyde cabin was being pumped the next day due to heavy use from recent events. Materials had been purchased to winterize plumbing at the cabin and school house, with shutters to be installed by the weekend. The transfer station was expected to slow down for winter as approximately 12 residents had already said "see you in the spring" as they headed south.

IT Update

Carrie provided an important update about Microsoft ending support for Windows 10 as of October 14, 2025. She emphasized that all town laptops and computers needed to be updated to Windows 11, warning that the update process was time-consuming and would require multiple restarts. She urged board members and staff who hadn't used their town laptops recently to contact Thrive IT support to schedule the updates. The process could take an entire weekend even on up-to-date computers.

Jen Morway confirmed that computers in the town office and at the highway department had already been updated, though one extra computer at the highway department might be beyond repair. Board members requested Melissa Boutin provide a list of who had town laptops to ensure everyone completed the necessary updates.

New Business

Budgets

Grand Isle Rescue

Ray Mitchell presented the rescue department's budget request for \$73,000 for fiscal year 2027, representing level funding with no increase. Board members expressed appreciation for the detailed financial information provided with the budget submission.

"I make a motion we approve the \$73,000 for FY 27 for the Grand Isle Rescue," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ellen Howrigan. The motion passed unanimously.

Recreation Department

Emily White presented the recreation department's budget request for \$20,900, also level-funded from the previous year. She reported significant success with adult programs, particularly the summer softball league which was generating additional revenue. This revenue would be reinvested in adult programming, supplies, and potentially rec park improvements.

Emily noted concerns about dying ash trees at the park and agreed to coordinate with the highway department and tree warden Bill Baron about removal. The board commended the recreation committee for their excellent work in expanding programs and drawing participants from other towns.

When asked about their fund balance, it was confirmed the department had approximately \$25,000 in surplus funds that remained earmarked for recreation use. The board briefly discussed future needs including potential master planning for Donaldson Park and Pearl Bay beach, as well as safety improvements to the beach stairs.

"I make a motion that we approve the budget of \$20,900 for the recreation fund for FY 27," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ellen Howrigan. The motion passed unanimously.

Zoning

The board reviewed the zoning administrator's budget, which created some confusion due to multiple documents submitted by both the planning commission and the ZAO. After clarification, the board focused on Scott's submitted budget showing revenue of \$22,150 and expenses of \$31,650.

The board discussed the need to potentially increase the ZAO salary line item given the upcoming search for a new administrator. They settled on increasing the salary from \$25,000 to \$33,000 to provide flexibility in hiring, calculating this based on potentially 25 hours per week at \$25 per hour. This brought the total expense budget to \$39,650.

"I make a motion we approve the ZAO budget of \$39,650 and a revenue of \$22,150 for FY 27," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ellen Howrigan. The motion passed unanimously.

Development Review Board

The Development Review Board representatives were not present. The board agreed to follow up with them for a future meeting.

Planning Commission

The planning commission requested \$5,100 for fiscal year 2027 with no revenue except potential grants. Discussion included IT costs at approximately \$180 per person annually for email and cybersecurity. The board agreed planning should budget for 5 people at \$200 each plus a \$500 buffer for potential software needs.

"I make a motion for planning commission \$5,100 for budget FY 27," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ellen Howrigan. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel Policy Addendum

Aimee Cochran presented an employee conduct complaint form and addendum to the personnel policy dated October 6, 2025. The board discussed the need for a fillable version of the form and proper signature lines.

"I'd like to make a motion that we approve this employee conduct complaint form and the addendum to the personnel policy dated 10/6/2025," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ronnie Bushway. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

Library Project: Status Update

Mike Connor from Connor Construction presented a detailed update on the library project, but first addressed what he characterized as procedural issues and misinformation. He expressed frustration about what he saw as interference with the construction management process, specifically referencing a pre-bid meeting on October 3rd where Selectboard members had solicited general contractor interest while Connor Construction was conducting their subcontractor bidding process.

Mike explained the difference between construction management and general contractor approaches, emphasizing that as the selected construction manager, his firm should have been given time to properly solicit and evaluate subcontractor bids without competing GC bids being sought simultaneously. He noted that this confusion had caused some subcontractors to drop out of the bidding process.

Board members explained their perspective that the architect had not clearly communicated the process to them. They noted receiving only a spreadsheet comparing fees rather than full proposals, and expressed frustration with what they saw as a disconnect in communication throughout the project.

Mike presented bid results from subcontractors for site work, concrete, electrical, mechanical, and windows/doors. The revised budget based on 75% complete drawings came to \$1,795,000, which included:

- Site work bids from Island Excavating and Bush and Sons
- Concrete bid from Harrison Concrete (\$77,000)
- Electrical bids from Cummings Electric and Provost & Sons (approximately \$203,000-\$206,000)
- Mechanical bid from Thomas Mechanical (\$35,000 less than Connor's estimate)
- Window package using Marvin products at \$260,046.14

The budget included additions Mike recommended such as a dormer roof at the entrance for safety and standing seam metal roofing instead of asphalt shingles. It also reflected removal of engineered wood siding (saving \$30,000), elimination of access control/security systems, and reduction of contingency from 10% to 2.5% (\$42,000).

After extensive discussion about communication failures and project management approaches, the board agreed to schedule a special meeting to review the detailed estimates. Jeff Parizo asked directly if the board felt he had done anything inappropriate, to which Ronnie Bushway responded that he was surprised to learn board members were seeking bids without full board knowledge, though he acknowledged Jeff's successful track record managing the town garage and fire station projects. It was pointed out that a RFP was published for GC services, and the bids being received are for GC services, per the RFP's request.

Website Design: Contract Received

The website design contract had been sent to the town attorney for review. The board was waiting for the attorney's response before proceeding.

Old Library Roof Project

Susan Willard reported that the old library would need to close November 24-26 (the week of Thanksgiving) while contractors replaced the roof with standing seam metal in preparation for solar panel installation. The board agreed this was reasonable given the liability concerns of roofing work and the holiday week timing.

Job Description: Zoning Administrative Officer

The board discussed the zoning administrator job description that had been posted. Key concerns centered on site visits and safety protocols. After extensive discussion, the board agreed that:

- Site visits should only occur for wastewater system inspections when invited by engineers.
- The ZAO should never conduct site visits alone, especially for violations or complaints.
- Any site visit policies should be clearly documented in the job description.
- Most property verification would come through the listers' office.

The board tabled final approval of the job description until the November 3rd meeting to allow time for incorporating these safety requirements.

Town Charter: Status update

Jeff Parizo reported that the attorney confirmed the August 10, 2025 version was final. The board needed to determine approval deadlines to meet the January 22nd implementation date requirement. Carrie would follow up with the attorney on required timelines for public hearings and approval process.

Junk Ordinance

Jen Morway provided an extensive update on the junk ordinance development. After consultation with Sheriff Ray Allen, she clarified important distinctions about enforcement authority. The sheriff's department can remove personal property from private property only when requested by the private property owner - they cannot remove items from someone's property based on third-party complaints.

Key points included:

- The ordinance would likely need the constable to serve as the municipal enforcement officer.
- The board would need to formally appoint someone and register them with the judicial bureau.
- Trever Boutin (the current constable) would need to be consulted about willingness to take on this role.
- Zoning Administrative Officer Scott Brown was working on adjusting the fine structure, which he felt was currently too high.

The board agreed Jen would send out a final draft within the week and reach out to Trever about serving as enforcement officer.

Credit Card Policy

The board reviewed the updated credit card policy appendix reflecting current cardholders including Steve Moore, Don Mills, and Robin Berger. The policy itself remained unchanged.

"I make a motion we approve the appendix to the Town of Grand Isle credit card policy and that the employees who are holding credit cards sign the policy," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ronnie Bushway. The motion passed unanimously.

Round Barn Project

The board received a last-minute request from the Round Barn project developers needing the town to submit paperwork in GEARS (grant management software) by November 3rd for Vermont Community Development Block Grant funding. The request involved the town serving as the applicant with funds potentially staying on town books for 15-20 years.

Board members expressed serious concerns about the rushed timeline, lack of information about financial implications, potential audit requirements, and impact on the town's bonding capacity. They agreed they needed much more information before committing to anything and directed the chair to communicate that the timeline was too aggressive for proper consideration.

Executive Session

"I'd like to make a motion to go into executive session to discuss contracts pending per 1 VSA state statute 313(a)(2) that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or persons involved at substantial disadvantage," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ronnie Bushway. The motion passed unanimously at 8:41 PM.

The board came out of executive session at 8:50 PM.

"I'd like to make a motion we come out of executive session. And with that motion, I'd like to go ahead with the transfer station cameras for \$777.31 to come out of the transfer station budget. And I'd also like to make a motion to spend \$2,023.95 for the town building or the town clerk's office and the library building and for that to come out of the IT budget," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Jen Morway. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Check-In

The board forwent the administrative check-in due to the late hour.

Adjournment

"I move to adjourn," moved by Jeff Parizo, seconded by Ellen Howrigan. The motion passed unanimously at 8:52 PM.