

# 12-01-2025 Selectboard Meeting

## Meeting minutes

### CALL TO ORDER

The Grand Isle Selectboard meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM on Monday, December 1, 2025. Board members present were Aimee Cochran, Ron Bushway, Jeff Parizo, Ellen Howrigan, and Jennifer Morway. Community members present included Colin Bushway, Lucille Campbell, Steve Moore, and Evan Wing. Carrie San Angelo joined via Zoom. Online participants included Esther Blow, Lynda Morgan Gardiner, and Carrie San Angelo.

### Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

When asked about amendments to the agenda, Aimee Cochran, Ron Bushway, Jeff Parizo, Ellen Howrigan, and Jennifer Morway all indicated they had nothing to add to the agenda.

### Public Comment

During public comment, Colleen Bushway brought up a petition from home services for VMA regarding the town meeting. She pointed out an error in the petition, stating "Have any of you seen the petition from help from the home services for VMA? Catch the mistake in it?" She explained that the petition incorrectly stated "warning for the annual town meeting to be held on the second Tuesday of March 2026," when it should be the first Tuesday. She had initially prepared to sign it, noting they had spent 74 cents on postage with a self-addressed stamped envelope, but caught the error upon closer reading.

Discussion ensued about whether signatures collected on the incorrect petition would be void, with board members agreeing they likely would be. The petition apparently required 97 signatures. Colleen confirmed she had already contacted the woman whose name was on the bottom of the cover letter. Board members agreed to also reach out to address the issue.

Additional public comment praised the appearance of the new library roof, with multiple people noting how good it looked. There was brief mention that solar installers were still working on the roof at that time.

### Review and Approve Minutes

Carrie San Angelo apologized, explaining "That just sent out to you today, guys. It was posted, but I just didn't send it out to you guys." Board members noted unusual formatting in the minutes, including ellipses and direct dialogue that doesn't normally appear. When asked about editing, Carrie responded, "I edited some of it, but there were some details that I did not edit." The board decided to table approval of the minutes to the next meeting to allow for proper editing. Carrie agreed to send the edited version once complete.

### Guests

Two guests were scheduled for later in the meeting for interviews in executive session.

### Review and Sign Warrants

Ellen Howrigan had questions about the warrants, specifically regarding payroll transfers not equaling expected amounts. She also inquired about cable bills, noting "it looks like we're always paying part of it, but not the

whole thing. And I just didn't know why the what they say is due and what we're paying is different." It was explained that this was due to timing issues with bills crossing in the mail, and they only pay the current amount.

Motion by Ellen Howrigan to approve the warrants and payroll. Seconded by Ronnie Bushway. Motion carried unanimously.

## Financials

### Audit Report June 30, 2025

Jeff Parizo opened discussion of the audit report by commending Melissa for the helpful information she's been providing, stating "the information you're providing to us is very helpful. I appreciate it, especially with the comments you've given us and stuff like that. I do like the cash flow for the general checking. That that I understand. I appreciate it."

Jeff noted that they're receiving much more information from Melissa now, which is "really helpful" and "really makes sense." He identified the main deficiency in the audit as general journal entries, asking "So I guess we just need to figure that out."

Ellen Howrigan suggested scheduling a meeting with the auditor, as part of their contract includes coming in or via Zoom to review the findings. The board discussed that these journal entries aren't actually all journal entries - many are just small bank interest entries of "3 cents, 2 cents" that shouldn't be classified that way.

There was detailed discussion about investment and banking policy requirements. The audit noted the town's investment banking policy requires collateralization, and recommended they either adhere to the policy or modify it. Jeff explained they have a large CD over \$400,000 that exceeds FDIC limits but is collateralized. The board agreed to add appropriate wording about collateralization letters to their investment policy.

Discussion also covered outstanding checks, with some being quite old and stale. The board agreed these should be reissued, and after two years of non-response, would go to the treasury as unclaimed property.

The board decided to tentatively schedule the auditor's presentation for January 5th, pending his availability, before formally accepting the audit report.

## Highway Department Update

### Grant Application for Highway Solar Project

Jennifer Morway presented a solar grant application for the highway department. There was confusion about the estimate, as it showed the address as 82 Allen Road, which board members realized was actually Ron's house, not the highway garage. Jennifer noted the grant was due December 4th and would require up to a 20% match.

The solar system estimate was for \$46,600, meaning a match of approximately \$9,320. Jeff noted "I think it's a win because it's gonna pay itself back in the probably the first 5 years."

After discussion about where funds would come from, Jeff suggested splitting the match three ways: "I do a third. So like Jen said, we budget some money. I do a third out of highway and a third out of our budget here, our unassigned funds because it's really benefiting highway because eventually they won't have an electric bill."

The board agreed to approve applying for a grant up to \$125,000 with appropriate match funding, pending verification of the correct building location. Ron asked about battery backup requirements, with Jennifer confirming it was required for the grant application.

Steve Moore provided the highway department update. He reported they had worked down by Fencivs, clearing leaves from deep ditches that carry significant spring water. He noted some areas had "2 feet of leaves" blocking water flow, possibly from neighbors blowing leaves into ditches.

Other accomplishments included servicing and storing the Kubota at the recycling center, servicing the excavator with minor repairs, getting plows on trucks, and conducting an ash tree inventory. Steve reported

finding approximately 130 problematic ash trees, with about 85 being 12 inches or smaller, 26 around 2 feet, and 19 larger trees.

Steve had obtained a quote of \$500 per hour for tree removal services including chipper, truck, one worker, and bucket truck. Island Tree Service was noted as being "quite a bit below that." Discussion ensued about the significant costs expected over the next 3-4 years for ash borer tree removal, with Ron noting "the next 3 years are gonna be big money for us with and if we're not taking out some of these big ones sooner than later, it's gonna be more cost us more in the long run."

Jeff explained their long-term strategy: "if we spend a bunch of money in the next 3, 4 years to get them cleaned up with the mowing practice we have now, hopefully, we won't be spending this money after 3, 4 years because the mowing will keep them down."

Discussion of hiring a third highway employee was raised. Steve expressed interest in having another full-time employee rather than relying on per diem help. Jeff supported this, saying "I'm confident Steve could manage it and keep everyone busy and get a lot done." However, the board agreed this was too significant to add to the current budget and should be discussed over the summer for the next budget cycle.

Motion by Jeff Parizo to approve the highway budget as presented for 2027 for the amount of \$537,130. Seconded by Aimee Cochran. Ron Bushway recused himself as he helped with the budget. Motion carried.

## **Buildings Facilities Manager Update**

Ron Bushway reported that Best Septic would be at the town office Thursday for quarterly service, and Howard would service heating systems at the town office, library, and annex the following week.

## **IT Update**

### **Website Development Meeting scheduled for 12/2/2025 12-2:00pm**

The board confirmed that Carrie San Angelo, Aimee Cochran, and Adam would attend the website development meeting scheduled for December 2nd from 12:00-2:00 PM.

## **New Business**

### **NWRP DRAFT Regional Future Land Use Map**

Jeff Parizo expressed concerns about the draft regional future land use map, particularly regarding areas designated as "rural conservation." He stated, "when you say the word conservation, it brings up a lot of anxiety, especially for me." The planning commission was scheduled to meet with NWRP representatives the following evening at 6:00 PM, with the meeting open to public participation either in person or via Zoom.

## **Budgets**

### **Highway & Transfer Station**

For the highway and transfer station budgets, Steve More and Ron Bushway led detailed discussions. Steve highlighted the need for a potential increase in the highway budget due to rising costs, including those for sand and equipment maintenance. There was also discussion about the significant costs expected over the next 3-4 years for ash borer tree removal. Additionally, the board considered the possibility of hiring a third highway employee rather than relying on per diem help. For the transfer station, Ron detailed line items such as attendant wages, FICA, and equipment expenses. He also mentioned the need for improvements including a new concrete slab for the trash compactor and an update to the retaining wall area. Despite the projected expenses, the board confirmed both the highway and transfer stations are managing within their budgets, with the transfer station being self-sustaining through user fees.

Motion by Jeff Parizo to approve the highway budget for \$537,130 and the transfer station budget for \$122,259. Seconded by Ellen Howrigan for highway; Jen Morway for the transfer station. Ron Bushway recused himself from both votes. Both motions carried.

## Town Clerk

Melissa presented the town clerk budget showing a 3% increase compared to FY26. She noted they're already seeing increased revenue in recordings and preservation fees in the first four months, though cautioned "it's very hard to predict" as "the bottom could fall out tomorrow."

Melissa requested increasing Terri's hourly rate from \$20.60 to \$26.50 and her hours from 30 to 35 per week (up to 35 hours). This would qualify Terri for dental insurance at 30 hours. The board engaged in detailed discussion about insurance implications, confirming the policy handbook showed 30 hours as the threshold for benefits.

Ellen expressed support: "looking at the rate of pay, I feel like that's a well deserved. I feel like that rate is low for which she's been paying an hour." The board agreed that if the additional hours would free up Melissa for other responsibilities and improve office coverage, it was worthwhile.

The board agreed to the changes pending addition of health insurance costs to the budget, with final approval at the next meeting. They clarified the \$26.50 would be Terri's rate effective July 1st without an additional 3% COLA on top.

## Old Business

### Junk Ordinance: No update, table to 12/15/2025

The junk ordinance was tabled to December 15th. Jeff noted David had just emailed about it at 6:11 PM during the meeting.

### Town Charter Public Hearing 1: 12/15/2025 @ 6:00pm with regular SB meeting to follow

The first town charter public hearing was confirmed for December 15th at 6:00 PM.

### Town Charter Public Hearing 2: 1/19/2026 @ 6:00pm with regular SB meeting to follow

Carrie San Angelo explained the timing requirements for public hearings, noting they must be published for at least 15 days and preferably three weeks. She advised against scheduling the second hearing too close to the first to avoid confusion and allow adequate notice time. The board discussed potentially adjusting the date based on David's recent email guidance.

## Executive Session

Motion by Jeff Parizo to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter pending per 1 VSA statute 313(a)(2) that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or person involved at substantial disadvantage, inviting in Evan Wing and Sara Santor. Seconded by Ron Bushway. Motion carried unanimously at 6:56 PM.

The board came out of executive session at 7:40 PM.

Motion by Jeff Parizo that the board has chosen someone to take over for Carrie as selectboard administrator pending references. Seconded by Ron Bushway. Motion carried unanimously.

## Administrative Check-In

No administrative items were discussed.

## Adjournment

Motion by Jeff Parizo to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM. Seconded by Ron Bushway. Motion carried unanimously.

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