

Town of Grand Isle

# 03-05-2026 GI Selectboard Special Organizational Meeting

## Meeting minutes

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM on March 5, 2026, by Ellen Howrigan.

Board Members Present: Aimee Cochran, Ron Bushway, Ellen Howrigan, Jeff Parizo, and Jennifer Morway.

Community Members Present: Melissa Boutin, Sara Santor, and Lucille Campbell (via Zoom).

### Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

Melissa Boutin requested to add an item under new business regarding a phone call she received from the school district requesting advance funds ahead of their third installment payment. This was directed to be filed under new business as "school district cash request."

### Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

### Nominate and Elect Selectboard Chair and Vice Chair

Jeff Parizo opened the discussion by asking "Who wants it?" and expressing willingness to serve. Ron Bushway also indicated he would do it but was open to others taking the position. Ellen Howrigan asked Jennifer Morway if she wanted the role. Ron Busway noted that while they're "only titles collectively" and everyone works together as a team, the chair position typically involves more work.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to nominate Jennifer Morway as Chair and Aimee Cochran as Vice Chair. Ellen Howrigan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Review and Approve Minutes

Chair Morway noted that while draft minutes from the previous meeting had been sent out, the clerk felt everyone needed more time to review them given the quick turnaround. The minutes were tabled for review at the next meeting.

### Guests

No guests were present.

## Review and Sign Warrants

Jennifer Morway asked if everyone had a chance to review the warrants. Jeff Parizo indicated he hadn't looked at them yet, so this item was moved to after old business to allow more time for review.

## Financials

No financials were presented.

## Highway Department Update

Ron Bushway reported they are still working on the apron project, which is not yet completed. Jeff Parizo inquired about expected weather, specifically ice and sleet forecasted for the area. Ron indicated the severe weather was expected south of I89 and south of Burlington, so Grand Isle should only see possible rain.

## Buildings Facilities Manager Update

No update was provided.

## IT Update

Aimee Cochran reported she needs to email Paul to check on website updates, as she hasn't heard from him recently.

## New Business

### Designate meeting time/place, posting locations, & newspaper of record

Ellen Howrigan moved to keep the current arrangements the same. Ron Bushway seconded.

Jennifer Morway clarified the specifics: meetings are held the first and third Monday of every month at the town office at 6 PM, with financials at 5:15 PM. Posting locations are at Emmons, outside the town office, and outside the library, and on the website. The newspaper of record is the Islander.

Motion: Ellen Howrigan moved to maintain current meeting times, locations, and newspaper of record arrangements. Aimee Cochran seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## Annual Appointments

### Emergency Management Assistant, 1 year term

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to reappoint Tyler Hemingway to the position of Emergency Management Assistant for a one-year term. Ellen Howrigan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Northwest Fiberworks, 1 year term (2 positions)

Jeff Parizo reported he hadn't heard back from Mike Inners. It was decided to repost these positions on Front Porch Forum and the website, with an additional advertisement in the Islander.

### Town Tree Warden, 1 year term

Jeff Parizo reported that Bill Baron had emailed accepting the position again.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to appoint Bill Baron as Grand Isle Town Tree Warden for a one-year term. Ellen Howrigan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1 year term (2 positions)

Jeff Parizo reported that Barclay Morris agreed to serve his one-year term, and while Howard DeMars hadn't responded, they would include him as he typically serves. The motion also included appointing Barclay Morris to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) under Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Aimee questioned whether they should make Howard's appointment conditional on his official acceptance, but it was clarified he could decline or resign at any point.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve Barclay Morris and Howard DeMars for one-year terms on Northwest Regional Planning Commission, and Barclay Morris to the Transportation Advisory Committee. Ellen Howrigan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Northwest Solid Waste District, 1 year term

Jennifer Morway suggested reaching out to Kaylie Barber, an engineer who serves on the planning commission. Morway volunteered to contact her directly. This position would also be included in the general advertisement for open positions.

### Conflict of Interest Policy

Jeff Parizo questioned whether the conflict of interest policy was redundant given the new ethics requirements, wondering if ethics covered the same areas. Jennifer clarified that the conflict of interest policy was specific to the Town of Grand Isle.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve the conflict of interest policy for one year. The motion was seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Selectboard Open Meeting Policy SOP and Rules & Procedures Documents

The board reviewed two documents that had been updated in August. Jennifer confirmed the rules and procedures covered meeting logistics, motions, posting requirements, and public participation guidelines. The SOP included updates for clerk minutes and selectboard grant reporting, as well as provisions for attendance and Zoom participation.

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to approve the selectboard rules procedures and the open meeting policy and SOPs. Aimee Cochran seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Fraud Risk Assessment Team

Jennifer noted she had served on this team last year, it mostly involved attending meetings. Ellen Howrigan, Jeff Parizo, and Aimee Cochran volunteered to serve, with Ron Bushway participating due to his highway and transfer station roles. Jennifer Morway offered to help as well and noted they would need to schedule the required meeting.

## Old Business

The board moved directly to reviewing warrants as there was no other old business.

Review and Sign Warrants (moved from earlier)

The board reviewed warrants from Monday's meeting plus one new warrant folder. Ellen clarified there were two folders to review.

Motion: Aimee Cochran moved to approve the warrants. Jeff Parizo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## New Business

### School District Cash Request

Melissa Boutin provided detailed background on a phone call she received from the supervisory union regarding the Unified Union school district's cash flow issues. The district was requesting advance funds to make payroll and pay bills, asking if Grand Isle could provide funds before the May due date. When asked about amounts, the caller suggested \$100,000 would help.

Melissa explained that while the town's third collection deadline is April 30th, payments to schools aren't due until May. She had told the caller it wasn't her decision but would bring it to the board. The treasurer noted the Town is still awaiting final numbers on homestead versus nonresidential taxes, and there's still a \$50,000 capital reserve payment and \$10,000 for reappraisal that hasn't been dispersed yet.

The discussion revealed the complexity of the school funding structure, with the Grand Isle Unified Union School District consisting of North Hero, Grand Isle, and Isle La Motte. There was confusion about the relationship between the supervisory union and the school district, with Melissa explaining she has access to view invoices electronically but doesn't see payroll information anymore.

Ellen expressed frustration with what she perceived as poor planning by the school district, referencing significant deficits in their 2023 and 2024 audits.

The board discussed the need for more information before advancing any funds, including:

- A detailed accounts payable list
- Explanation of why they're behind financially
- How long the advance would need to last
- Monthly expense breakdown
- Clarification of staffing and oversight roles

It was decided to invite school district representatives to the March 16th meeting to provide detailed financial information. Melissa will contact them to arrange this.

The board expressed concern about the pattern of financial management issues and lack of adequate oversight, particularly given the multi-million dollar budget involved.

## Executive Session

No executive session was held.

## Administrative Check-In

Jennifer Morway noted that Melissa would reach out to the school, Sara would post the necessary advertisements for open positions, and Morway would reach out to Kaylie Barber about the solid waste district position.

## Adjournment

Motion: Jeff Parizo moved to adjourn at 5:46 PM. Ellen Howrigan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:46 PM.