

05-18-2026 Selectboard Meeting

Meeting Minutes

May 18, 2026, 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

DRAFT

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Grand Isle Selectboard meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM on Monday, May 18, 2026, at 9 Hyde Rd, Grand Isle, VT.

Present: Jeff Parizo, Ron Bushway, Jennifer Morway, Chair, Aimee Cochran, Vice Chair, Ellen Howrigan

Absent/Via Zoom: No board members attended via Zoom.

Community Members Present: Colleen Bushway, Bill Baron, Susan Willard, Gabriella Pacht, Michael Frett, John and Kim Chesarek

Community Members via Zoom: Lucille Campbell, Lynda Morgan-Gardner

II. Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

Board Member Jeff Parizo noted that a CD-related item, communicated via email from Melissa, would be addressed under Financials. Additionally, the Fourth of July scheduling discussion was added under New Business. The Chair indicated that the MERP quotes would be moved down to be addressed alongside the rooftop solar projects under the Library Update so that all related items could be handled together.

III. Public Comment

Potential Development on Adjacent Property — Adams School Road

Community member Gabriella Pacht raised a concern that a property to the north of their parcel on Adams School Road appeared to be under potential development, and that the development might encroach upon or utilize part of their property. The community member requested that the Selectboard look into the matter and ensure no development proceeds on their parcel.

Board Member Parizo clarified that the concern may be related to overshadowing of the wastewater system, which is governed by a state wastewater permit rather than the town directly. He explained that if the property were being subdivided into four lots as described, it would constitute a major subdivision and would require three Development Review Board (DRB) hearings — a preliminary hearing, a small plat hearing, and a large plat hearing — and that as an abutting landowner, the resident would receive notice by mail. Chair Morway recommended the resident contact the Zoning Administrator for more information.

The Chair encouraged the resident to email the Selectboard through the town website if further questions arose, noting they could be connected with the appropriate contacts.

Grand Isle Free Library — Holiday Events and Light Parade

Susan Willard, representing the Grand Isle Free Library board, addressed the Selectboard on behalf of board member Diana Arfane, who was unable to attend. Ms. Willard expressed excitement that the new library is on track to open in December 2026 and raised interest in having the library's opening coincide with a community holiday event, such as a light parade. She noted the library missed participation in the previous year's event and was hoping to get connected with whoever organizes the parade or similar activities.

Board Member Parizo clarified that there were effectively two distinct events: a formal holiday parade that was historically organized by the Masons lodge — a collaboration involving himself, Tanya from the Islander, and Nick Lane from Snow Farm — which required a state permit to close Route 2 and had featured floats and participants, and which had not been organized in recent years due to a lack of volunteers; and a separate rolling display organized by the South Hero Fire Department, which does not constitute a formal parade. He expressed openness to having conversations about reviving the formal parade, potentially in a different location.

Ms. Willard also floated the idea of a nondenominational holiday gathering in the space between the town hall and the new library, noting that a "tree lighting" concept had generated some disagreement. She indicated she would follow up with Diana and suggested that perhaps a broader community committee — with representation from the library, recreation department, fire department, and other boards — might be the best vehicle for organizing such an event, rather than having it fall under any single board. The Chair indicated this was a good approach and suggested she speak with Board Member Parizo about the prior parade effort.

IV. Review and Approve Minutes

a. 5/4/26 minutes

Board Member Parizo moved to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2026 Selectboard meeting with any corrections. The motion was seconded by Aimee Cochran. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Guests

a. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain bike event – June 13, 2026

John Chesareck from Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, a clean water advocacy organization, appeared before the board to provide notice of the group's sixteenth annual bicycle ride through the islands, scheduled for Saturday, June 13, 2026. He reported that nearly 300 riders participated last year, and the group hopes to reach a similar number. Riders depart from Knight Point State Park between 7:00 AM and 10:00 AM in small groups of one to seven, and may choose 30-, 60-, 80-, or 100-mile loops. The route enters Grand Isle at the bridge, proceeds up Route 2 to Griswald Road, and follows the lake toward the ferry. Approximately 30 riders take the ferry to the New York side and return around, while the remaining groups continue to Snow Farm Vineyard in South Hero for a rest stop before returning.

The Chair expressed appreciation that the event had been moved away from Father's Day weekend, which had historically coincided with Lake Champlain International (LCI) and created logistical concerns. Mr. Chesareck confirmed that the route maps had been forwarded to the town and to the sheriff's department. He noted that the sheriff's office had indicated its personnel were stretched and could not provide active assistance, and that riders are instructed to call 911 in emergencies and contact event staff for minor mechanical issues.

b. Bill Baron, Emergency Management Director – Town Emergency Management Plan

Emergency Management Director Bill Baron presented the Grand Isle Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) for 2026 approval, noting it must be filed with the Vermont State Emergency Management

office by June 1. Once submitted, the state reviews and approves the plan before returning it. Director Baron explained that the plan had been updated for April and May, and thanked board members who had reviewed their copies and provided corrections.

The Chair raised a question about whether Ladd's Landing Marina was still listed as a hazardous materials site, having noticed it appeared on previous versions but not the current one. Director Baron explained that the listing is derived from tier-2 reporting submitted directly to the state, and that he had populated this section using information provided by Adam White. He agreed to circle back with Adam to confirm whether Ladd's Landing had filed a current tier-2 report, acknowledging there may be a quantity trigger that explains its removal.

Board Member Howrigan provided several corrections from her review. Director Baron confirmed he would make those corrections.

Director Baron confirmed that hard copies of the approved plan are distributed to the town office, fire station, sheriff's office, school, himself as EMD, the assistant EMD Tyler Hemingway, the rescue squad, and the town garage.

Board Member Parizo moved to approve the Grand Isle Local Emergency Management Plan 2026 with any corrections noted during the meeting. The motion was seconded by Board Member Howrigan. There was no further discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Review and Sign Warrants

Chair Morway moved to address the warrant approval and noted a question regarding an Amazon Prime charge on the credit card statement attributed to the recreation department. She indicated she and the relevant staff had already discussed the matter and determined that the individual could be added as a user on an existing account so that purchases would remain separate. This was resolved prior to the vote.

Board Member Parizo moved to approve the warrants and payroll with corrections. Board Member Cochran seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. Financials

North Country CD Renewal — Transfer Station Reserve Fund

The town treasurer, Melissa, had communicated via email that CD 1003 at North Country, representing the transfer station reserve fund, was eligible for renewal. She reported that North Country was offering a 12-month certificate of deposit at 3.5%, which was the highest rate identified after comparison with other institutions, including Northfield Savings Bank, which offered 3.3% for a 5-month term. Because the funds were already held at North Country, renewal in place was the most straightforward option.

Board Member Parizo moved to approve the renewal of North Country CD 1003 — the transfer station reserve fund — into a 12-month CD at North Country at 3.5% or thereabouts, acknowledging a possible minor rate adjustment. The motion was seconded by Board Member Howrigan. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Highway Department Update

Board Member Ron Bushway, serving as the Buildings and Facilities Manager, delivered the highway update on behalf of Highway Foreman Steve More. He reported the following:

Roadside Mowing: Crews began roadside mowing that day, noting that the recent heavy rainfall had caused significant growth.

Road Sweeping: All town roads had been swept the prior week, with Steve having rented a sweeper to complete the work.

Library Site: Some preparatory work had been done at the new library site.

Tractor Acquisition: Steve had been soliciting quotes for a mowing tractor. He had identified a used Case tractor for \$55,000 that Board Member Bushway described as a good buy, noting it came equipped with a flail mower. The existing John Deere tractor with a Rhino mower — characterized as a "dinosaur" — had received a trade-in estimate of \$12,500 without the mower, with the board hoping to achieve a better price if sold with the mower attached. Board Member Parizo noted that the Rhino mower is oversized and too heavy for smaller tractors, requiring a heavy-duty three-point hitch, whereas the Case came with a suitably sized flail mower already attached. The board indicated it was not prepared to make a decision that evening and would revisit the matter at a future meeting.

Paving: Paving on East Shore North is scheduled to begin the third week of June.

Grant Project: The highway department will begin work the following week on a grant-funded road project.

Hazardous Waste Day: Board Member Bushway reported on the May 9th hazardous waste day event, noting a serious incident involving an elderly driver who had placed multiple open containers of fertilizers and chemicals together in the trunk of her vehicle, causing a dangerous chemical reaction. Northwest Solid Waste staff responded quickly, evacuating the vehicle and sealing the contents in a drum. The Northwest representative stated that had the vehicle traveled as far as Emmon's Market from the transfer station, the situation could have been life-threatening. The board briefly discussed whether future event communications should include a reminder about not mixing chemicals or transporting open containers together.

Free Metal Day: Scheduled for May 30th.

IX. Buildings Facilities Manager Update

Board Member Bushway reported the following on buildings:

- Shutters at the Hyde Log Cabin and the Block Schoolhouse had been finished and put away for the season.
- A drain issue mentioned at the prior meeting had been repaired by Howard.
- A broken wire on the furnace at the town office had been identified and repaired by Howard that morning, restoring functionality.
- Travis Boutin had been contacted to perform the annual air conditioning service at the town office.

Vice Chair Cochran asked about the library furnace. Board Member Bushway reported that the furnace appeared to be running as of the prior Monday's library board meeting, and that while a parts quote had been anticipated, it may not have been necessary. He noted this was a positive development given that the furnace noise had historically interfered with meetings.

a. MERP Quotes

Board Member Bushway indicated that the MERP quotes had been collected and were being distributed to board members in paper form. As board members had not yet reviewed the documents, it was agreed they would be scanned and emailed for review. The item was deferred to the next meeting agenda for a formal decision on which contractor to select. The Chair noted these were the quotes that had been moved from their original agenda position to be addressed alongside the Library Update.

X. Library Update

Board Member Parizo delivered the library construction update:

The slab is poured. Crews cut out window openings that day, with window installation by the contractor expected soon. The roof is expected to be completed by the end of the week, weather permitting — approximately two weeks ahead of schedule. Interior wall framing is anticipated to begin shortly, at which point board members would be invited to walk through and confirm wall placement.

Financials: Approximately \$747,000 in fees had been paid to date, with \$29,498 paid to MERP, and \$113,000 in non-grant-reimbursable costs. Of the total, approximately \$605,000 had been reimbursed through the grant. Over \$1,000,000 remained available in the library grant, and the library's own contribution of \$100,000 remained committed. Approximately \$533,000 remained in the former ARPA fund (referred to informally as the "formerly known as ARPA" fund). The board noted it was still in good financial shape overall.

a. Rooftop Solar Proposals

The Chair explained that at the prior meeting, the board had approved a rooftop solar installation with MaxFit at a quoted cost of \$149,403. However, it had since become apparent that there was a change in the format of their quotes. The current quote structure shows a system cost of \$213,432 with a "direct incentive" deduction of \$64,049, yielding a cash price of \$149,383. The problem, as confirmed by Town Treasurer Melissa Boutin, is that the "direct incentive" represents a federal tax credit for which the town is not eligible when using grant dollars to fund the purchase. Accordingly, the true cost to the town is the full system cost of \$213,432.

The board examined two scenarios — proceeding with the maximum-capacity system at \$213,432, or scaling back to a 40%-capacity system at approximately \$159,699 (roughly \$10,000 more than the previously approved figure). At the 40% level, the town would have an estimated surplus of approximately \$2,800 within the MERP grant; at the maximum level, the town would be approximately \$50,892 short within the MERP grant alone.

Chair Morway noted that the current estimated MERP grant balance stood at approximately \$419,223 (after accounting for Bernie Gage Plumbing at approximately \$195,000, insulation and spray foam, and remaining ZIP labor). If the additional quoted work was estimated at approximately \$20,000 and the maximum solar system at \$213,432, the town would be approximately \$50,892 short of the MERP grant balance.

However, the board discussed that the former ARPA fund (\$533,000) and the library grant — which still held approximately \$1,075,000 with an estimated surplus of \$85,000 even without ARPA — could be used to cover any shortfall, as the two funding streams are compatible. Board Member Parizo argued strongly in favor of the maximum-capacity system, noting that approximately 33 panels would be lost by downgrading and that the system would generate significant long-term savings on electricity costs for the town garage, transfer station, and other buildings. He also noted that the bulk of tariff-sensitive materials (roof, windows) were already in place, substantially reducing cost uncertainty going forward. Board Member Bushway concurred, characterizing the maximum system as a long-term investment that would pay for itself over 20 to 30 years. Vermont Solar was expected to begin installation shortly after the roof was completed.

Chair Morway noted that invoice number 1411 — a 50% deposit of \$106,716 (half of \$213,432) — had been held from the prior warrants pending board guidance and requested authorization to pay it that evening rather than waiting until the next meeting.

Board Member Parizo moved to amend the board's prior decision from the May 4, 2026 meeting and approve the maximum-capacity rooftop solar system at a total system cost of \$213,432, and further to authorize payment of Invoice No. 1411 in the amount of \$106,716 (representing the 50% deposit) as part of that evening's warrants. The motion was seconded by Board Member Howrigan. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Architect Contract

The Chair reported that the town's administrative staff, Sara, had prepared a letter for the board's signature formally terminating the architectural services contract with Weimann Lamphere Architects.

Board Member Parizo moved to authorize the Board to sign the letter formally terminating the contract with Weimann Lamphere Architects. The motion was seconded By Member Howrigan. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

XI. IT Update

Vice Chair Cochran reported on the town website project, noting that the contractor had experienced some staffing changes but was making progress. The board should expect to receive a staging version of the new website — a non-live preview — for review relatively soon, after which a review meeting would be scheduled. The anticipated turnaround once the site is delivered is expected to be quick. No further IT discussion arose.

XII. New Business

a. Town Health Officer Appointment

The Chair noted that Board Member Ron Bushway had been serving as the Town Health Officer. His current three-year term expires May 31, 2026, and the state had requested notification of the appointment by May 30, 2026. The board discussed the effective date, confirming that the new term would begin June 1, 2026, for a period of three years.

Board Member Parizo moved to reappoint Ron Bushway as Town Health Officer for a three-year term effective June 1, 2026. Board Member Howrigan seconded. There was no discussion. Board Member Bushway abstained. The motion carried.

b. Community Bank deposit account

Vice Chair Cochran explained that the purpose of this item was to formally authorize the opening of a deposit account at Community Bank so that town funds could be deposited locally on the islands, avoiding the need to leave the island for routine deposits. The account would function as a checking account and would sweep to the town's M&T Bank account. The treasurer noted she would gather the necessary documentation and indicated she would need to be a signer on the account.

Vice Chair Cochran moved to open a deposit account at Community Bank for the purpose of accepting town deposits on the islands, to be swept to the M&T Bank account. Member Howrigan seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Donation Policy Discussion

The Chair introduced this item, noting that the library board had raised questions about how monetary and in-kind donations to the town for library-related purposes should be handled. The board had previously consulted with the town attorney, who provided guidance indicating that the Town of Grand Isle can receive donations for municipal projects such as the library, and that checks should be made payable directly to the Town of Grand Isle and sent to the town treasurer. The attorney noted that if a donation has a specific intended use, that should be stated on the check or in an accompanying letter. The town treasurer can issue a receipt and acknowledgment letter for tax purposes. The attorney also noted the board is not required to maintain a donation policy.

Susan Willard, on behalf of Library Board Member Diana, explained the library board's concern: there may be donors wishing to make substantial contributions — potentially for naming opportunities — and the board wanted clarity on how to handle checks, maintain records, and ensure donor intent is honored. She asked whether checks could be made out to the Town of Grand Isle but directed to the library for tracking purposes.

The Chair noted that the attorney had pointed toward the Friends of the Library as a vehicle for some donations, but confirmed that donations intended for the library project can go directly through the town treasurer. Treasurer Boutin stated she would print two receipts for each donation — one for her files and one for the library trustees — providing a simple and transparent audit trail.

The board reviewed the existing donation policy, dated February 15, 2021, which had been located by the Treasurer. Members noted several concerns: it applied only to monetary donations and did not address in-kind contributions; and, most significantly, it required Selectboard approval for every donation, which the board found unduly cumbersome and potentially discouraging to donors. Board Member Parizo noted this was particularly problematic given that his informal agreement as library project manager had explicitly authorized him to accept in-kind donations of any kind.

The board agreed that repealing the existing policy was the most practical course. Without a policy, the treasurer would handle donations on a case-by-case basis, issuing receipts that include the donor's tax ID, the dollar amount or description of the in-kind gift, and the intended use. Board Member Howrigan suggested the thank-you letter template include a field for specifying the intended use of the gift. The board acknowledged that labor — such as volunteers installing bookshelves — would be a significant category of in-kind donation for the library project and should be documented accordingly.

Board Member Parizo moved to repeal the existing donation policy dated February 15, 2021. The motion was seconded by Member Howrigan. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

The board directed the treasurer to work with the library trustees to develop a standard acknowledgment letter template, with the library trustees indicating what language they would like included.

d. Town Charter

Board Member Parizo noted that the board still had several unresolved discussions to conduct regarding potential Town Charter amendments, specifically concerning the assessor position and the possible splitting of certain job functions, which had previously been targeted for discussion in August. Chair Morway flagged that if any amendments were to appear on the November ballot, the timeline was tighter than August — materials likely needed to be ready by July, as public hearings would be required beforehand. He proposed placing Town Charter on the agenda for the next meeting and asking administrative staff Sara to post a notice on Front Porch Forum so the community is aware that these discussions are resuming.

e. Donation to Front Porch Forum

Board Member Bushway raised the topic of making a donation to Front Porch Forum, noting that the town makes frequent use of the platform to post public notices and community announcements such as road closures and free metal day. He recalled that the board had previously made a \$100 donation in 2015. Residents at the transfer station had recently commented on the utility of the platform for staying informed about town events. Board Member Parizo stated he did not recall any prior donation and expressed disagreement with making one, though the majority of the board was in favor.

A brief discussion arose about the appropriate budget line. Vice Chair Cochran questioned whether the donation could properly be charged to the public notice account, given that Front Porch Forum posts do not constitute official legal notices. Treasurer Boutin said the last donation was paid from the memberships account and the Board suggested this was a more appropriate line, and Board Member Bushway amended his motion accordingly.

Board Member Bushway moved to donate \$100 to Front Porch Forum, charged to the memberships account. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Cochran. Board Member Parizo noted his strong disagreement. The motion carried, with Board Member Parizo voting against.

July Meeting Schedule

The board discussed the scheduling conflict created by Independence Day falling on a Saturday, July 4, 2026, with the first regular Monday meeting of July falling on July 6. Additionally, the board noted the

importance of addressing year-end financials and the Town Charter timeline. The board agreed to cancel the July 6 meeting and add a special warrant/meeting on June 29, 2026. It was noted that June has five Mondays, making June 29 a natural option. The Chair indicated the board would assess by the June 15 meeting whether additional business beyond warrants would be needed on June 29.

Board Member Howrigan moved to cancel the July 6, 2026 meeting and add a meeting on June 29, 2026 for warrants and any additional business. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Cochran. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

XIII. Old Business

a. Old library use survey

Vice Chair Cochran reported she was working on a community survey regarding potential uses for the old library building. She indicated she would visit the building to take measurements before finalizing the survey.

The board discussed potential use options. Vice Chair Cochran noted she was struggling to identify a list of options beyond "meeting space" and Chair Morway suggested leaving the survey as a free-form response field. Chair Morway suggested framing the survey around the board's current thinking — community meeting space — while leaving an open text field for suggestions.

Lucille Campbell, attending via Zoom on behalf of the Grand Isle Historical Society, noted that the historical society has a significant volume of books, notebooks, and scrapbooks currently stored in the block schoolhouse that require a climate-controlled environment. She noted these materials could be accessed by the public year-round if stored in a heated building, whereas the current schoolhouse location is inaccessible from mid-October through late May. She indicated the existing library shelving in the building would make it a natural fit for archival storage.

Susan Willard asked about the volume of material and floated the possibility of housing some of the historical society's cataloged materials in the new library, which will have four times the space of the current building. Ms. Campbell acknowledged this option but noted that much of the historical society's collection consists of local clippings and materials not cataloged that would be very difficult to formally catalog for library circulation. She indicated the old library could serve multiple purposes simultaneously — community meeting space, archival storage — and that the historical society was not seeking to exclusively occupy or manage the building.

Board Member Bushway recalled prior discussions about a town museum concept and noted that trophies from the Current Events Quiz — a storied competition that had historically featured Grand Isle students prominently — had gone missing from the school display cases. Ms. Campbell confirmed that the historical society had located most of those trophies in storage areas of the school and that they are now held in the block schoolhouse. Board Member Parizo asked whether those trophies could eventually be transferred to the old library if it were used for historical/community purposes; Ms. Campbell confirmed they could.

The board noted the old library is a historic building and that structural changes, such as removing the basement vault, are likely cost-prohibitive and could compromise the building's structural integrity, as determined in prior consultations. Vice Chair Cochran indicated she would finalize and distribute the survey using SurveyMonkey and post it publicly.

XIV. Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

XV. Administrative Check-In

The Chair noted that most administrative check-in items related to staff matters handled by Sara. No substantive public discussion was recorded under this item.

XVI. Adjournment

A motion was made by Member Howrigan to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. and was seconded by Vice Chair Cochran. There was no discussion, the motion carried.

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