06-01-2026 Selectboard Meeting

Meeting Minutes

June 1, 2026, 6:00 PM

DRAFT

I. CALL TO ORDER

Selectboard Chair Jennifer Morway called the meeting of the Grand Isle Selectboard to order at 6:00 PM on Monday, June 1, 2026, at 9 Hyde Road, Grand Isle, Vermont, and via Zoom.

Board Members Present: Jeff Parizo, Ron Bushway, Jennifer Morway, Ellen Howrigan

Board Members via Zoom: Aimee Cochran (noting she would need to depart at 6:45 PM and would be muted due to background noise in Burlington)

Community Members Present: Colleen Bushway, Jean Baker Prouty, Lucille Campbell, Melissa Boutin, Sara Santor

Community Members via Zoom: Lynda Morgan Gardiner, Esther Blow, Michael Miller

II. Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

Chair Morway noted that the Application for Laying Pipes & Wires at 46 Griswold Road (Agenda Item XII.e) would be tabled to the next meeting. Board Member Cochran, attending via Zoom, indicated she had a question regarding the bank account matter and requested it be addressed early in the meeting given her 6:45 PM departure.

Board Member Cochran asked whether Assistant Town Clerk Terri White needed to be a cosigner on the checking account and whether the Select Board Chair position should be listed by name (Jen Morway) or simply by title, so that it would not need to be updated with each change in chair. The board agreed that "Selectboard Chair" by title was the appropriate designation, and that the signers would be Melissa and Terri, with the Selectboard Chair having viewing access.

III. Public Comment

Community member Jean Baker Prouty addressed the board on behalf of the historical society. She opened by expressing appreciation for the cleanup work already completed at the historical society buildings and grounds, and then outlined several outstanding maintenance needs:

- Brush remaining on the north side, piled behind the barn area, still needs to be cleared.
- The rails on the fence need to be reinstalled, as the society's members were not capable of doing so themselves.
- The area behind the restroom needs further cleanup of brush and debris.
- A number of ash trees on the property require removal, with some uncertainty as to whether trees on the other side of the rail fence belong to the town or to the school, as the property line is unclear.

- Jean emphasized that several of the ash trees are in danger of falling on structures — specifically the school, the back cabin, or the barn — noting that they are fully dead from the top down.
- The ditch on the north driveway needs to have brush and a tree cut down around the culverts to maintain sight lines and traffic flow onto Route 2.

Board Member Bushway suggested that the smaller ones might be manageable by highway staff using the excavator. He acknowledged the brush pile was a known issue and explained that wet conditions had prevented earlier access.

On the question of ash tree removal timing, Chair Morway noted that ash tree removal funds for the current fiscal year had been expended, but that July 1st was approaching, when new funds would become available.

IV. Review and Approve Minutes

a. 5/18/26 Minutes

> Motion to approve the minutes of May 18, 2026, as written, was made by Selectboard Member Parizo and seconded by Selectboard Member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Guests

No guests were present.

VI. Review and Sign Warrants

A brief discussion occurred regarding the warrants. Board Member Howrigan noted that a credit card receipt line item on the warrant appeared to relate to telephone and Zoom charges — specifically Ooma and Zoom — which was confirmed. Chair Morway also noted that AT&T had been added as a new automatic payment through the credit card, consistent with the practice already in place for other utilities such as Consolidated Communications and Comcast.

> Motion to authorize the Chair to sign the warrants was made by Selectboard Member Parizo and seconded by Selectboard Member Bushway. The motion passed with Vice Chair Cochran abstaining as she was attending via Zoom.

VII. Financials

Board Member Howrigan presented observations on the financials, noting that she had not yet completed a full review but flagged two areas of concern: fuel costs in the Highway Department and heating costs at the library. Both were running significantly over budget compared to the same period last year — the library's fuel costs were described as nearly double or more than double. Board Member Bushway attributed this to a cold winter combined with elevated prices, and the board agreed this was a trend to keep in mind during future budget discussions given the volatility of fuel costs in recent years.

Chair Morway noted a positive offsetting factor: the warrants reflected a significant number of solar credits being generated by the current library and distributed to other town accounts. She expressed optimism that once the new library building is operational, solar production should provide meaningful relief on energy costs.

VIII. Highway Department Update

Board Member Bushway provided a summary of Highway Department activities as reported by Highway Foreman Steve More:

The grant project was started and completed the prior week, and photographs had been circulated. Board Member Bushway noted it came out very well. The crew was currently prepping East Shore North for paving. On Friday, the dumpsters had been rearranged in preparation for the free metal day held on Saturday, which resulted in three full dumpster loads. Those dumpsters were scheduled to be hauled away during the current week.

On the topic of mowing, Board Chair Morway noted that the board had received a number of emails from YOGI and the town annex, among others, regarding the new mowing contractor, Blades. Board Member Bushway reported that he had spoken with the contractor on Saturday at the free metal day and that the contractor was aware of the scheduling expectations. Board Member Bushway stated the contractor had addressed the annex situation and agreed to work with on developing a more consistent weekly schedule, as opposed to mowing on a ten-day or irregular cycle — particularly important during the current heavy growing season.

Historical Society member Lucille Campbell added that a previous mowing contractor had mowed closer to the ditch between the schoolhouse and Bullis' field, and observed that the current contractor appeared to be mowing only one width next to the driveway, leaving an area that is used for overflow parking unmowed. Board Member Bushway acknowledged this and indicated he would address it with the contractor, noting that a walkthrough of the sites with the contractor might be warranted to address similar issues that had arisen at the transfer station as well. Board Chair Morway acknowledged that growing pains with new contracts are common, but emphasized that the volume of complaints warranted prompt attention.

IX. Buildings Facilities Manager Update

Board Member Bushway provided the buildings and facilities update. The annual air conditioning service at the town offices is scheduled. He then addressed items related to the historical society cabin, confirming that the bench had been retrieved, the wishing well was in place, and some debris had been cleared from the front. He acknowledged that additional cleanup remains, particularly near the rail fence, noting it had not been addressed in some time due to wet conditions preventing equipment access.

X. Library Update

Board Member Parizo provided an update on the new library construction. The metal roof is complete, and the windows have been installed. Exterior trim on the windows is still to come. Doors will not be installed until construction is near completion to prevent damage. Electrical contractors are currently working on interior electrical. One of the exterior light posts was installed that day, with three more to be completed, and it was anticipated that exterior electrical work would be finished within the week. The team would then move on to rough grading the exterior of the building. Board Member Parizo noted he had a walk-through of the building scheduled with the library board for the following day. Board Member Cochran, attending via Zoom, reported that she had sent measurements for the desk in South Hero to Board Member Morway via text for reference.

XI. IT Update

Chair Morway noted there was no IT update.

XII. New Business

a. YOGI MOU

The corrected YOGI Memorandum of Understanding was presented for approval. It was noted that the date on the document read "May" and would need to be corrected to reflect June 1st. The agreement was confirmed as a three-year term.

> Motion to approve the corrected YOGI MOU and authorize the Chair to sign it was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

The Chair corrected the date on the document to June 1 before signing. Staff was asked to scan and file the executed copy.

b. Library Director Job Description

The Library Director Job Description was presented for approval. Board Member Parizo noted he had reviewed it electronically and was satisfied with it. A brief comment was made that additional job descriptions remain to be reviewed at future meetings.

> Motion to approve the Library Director Job Description was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Agenda item descriptions

Board Member Howrigan raised the topic, noting that it had been pointed out to her that the board's agenda items tend to be very broad, and that adding brief descriptive language beneath items — particularly those on which action might be taken — would provide helpful context to the public reviewing the agenda. She referenced the Town of Williston as an example to look to, and pointed to the procurement policy item on that evening's agenda as an example of more descriptive language. The board expressed general agreement, with no objection raised. The matter was noted as a going-forward practice rather than requiring formal action.

d. Procurement policy - Increase monetary value of requisition requirement for purchases

Chair Morway introduced this item, explaining that as part of updating the town's internal controls following the fraud risk assessment, she had been reviewing the existing procurement policy. Under the current policy, purchases over $2,000 require two quotes before Select Board approval, and purchases over $5,000 are classified as major purchases. She expressed concern that $2,000 is no longer a meaningful threshold given today's costs, and that it may inadvertently be setting departments and committees up for non-compliance — citing, for example, uniforms for the recreation committee that would routinely exceed $2,000.

Vice Chair Cochran asked how long ago these thresholds were established. Chair Morway indicated it was approximately two to three years ago, when the procurement policy was first put in place ahead of the influx of grant funding, and that the figure was borrowed from practices used by other municipalities rather than being independently calculated.

Board Member Howrigan expressed support for increasing the threshold, though was uncertain of the right new amount, and emphasized that the board would continue to see all receipts and invoices regardless. She also suggested that the policy include a clause enabling the board to automatically revoke any individual's purchasing authority if needed.

Vice Chair Cochran suggested researching what other towns are doing to ensure the new threshold is not out of step with prevailing practice and agreed to undertake that research. The board reached consensus that the current threshold is too low and that this item would be brought back at the next meeting with additional research.

e. Application for laying pipes & wires – 46 Griswold Road

This item was tabled to the next meeting, as noted during the agenda amendment.

f. Fire dept request to add/upgrade electrical outlets

Board Member Parizo confirmed he had reviewed the email from Fire Chief Adam White regarding the requested addition and upgrade of electrical outlets at the fire department. He indicated he was in agreement with the request, noting that the fire department would be covering the cost.

> Motion to approve the fire department's request to add and upgrade electrical outlets as requested, with the fire department funding the work, was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Morway indicated she would notify Chief Adam of the approval by email.

XIII. Old Business

a. Town Charter

Board Member Parizo opened discussion on the Town Charter, noting that a timeline had been compiled with Sara's assistance. He acknowledged that further community discussion is needed before a decision can be made about placing the charter on the November ballot.

Board Member Parizo reported that the feedback he had personally received centered primarily on the local option tax — specifically the sales tax component — as the most significant point of opposition. Other board members echoed this, noting that no one had expressed objections to the charter as a whole beyond that provision.

Community member Lucille Campbell offered that with the current economic climate — elevated gas and grocery prices — residents may be reflexively opposed to any new tax, regardless of what it actually applies to. Chair Morway clarified for the record that the proposed local option tax would apply to short-term rentals such as Airbnbs, restaurant meals, and alcohol — not groceries or gasoline.

Chair Morway also noted the broader structural importance of the charter, explaining that it is not merely about tax authority but also about the town's ability to appoint key positions — specifically listers and potentially a professional assessor — which the current structure does not allow. She emphasized that the charter's passage is tied to the town's operational stability going into future budget cycles, because without it, the Selectboard lacks the authority to hire an assessor even if elected listers were to step down.

Board Member Bushway raised a concern, noting that a community member had asked him whether the board intended to keep putting the charter on the ballot until it passed — a reference to prior school budget re-votes. He indicated he had told that person the board would not continue resubmitting it indefinitely if voters rejected it, though he acknowledged the timeline pressure around the lister and assessor issue.

Lynda Morgan Gardiner, attending via Zoom, offered substantive commentary. She agreed that the tax provision was the primary concern she had heard, but argued that what has been missing from the public conversation is a clear explanation of why the town needs the ability to appoint these positions. She stated: "People need to understand that you need these positions to keep the town moving forward, and they've got to have a clear picture as to what moving forward actually looks like." She spoke candidly about the strain on the current listers' office, noting that she and the remaining lister had been doing three people's work with two people, far exceeding the hours she was originally hired to provide. She stressed that if even one more lister were to step down, the town would be in a very difficult position.

Vice Chair Cochran reported that she had done a quick search and believed that pursuing a local option tax may no longer require a town charter — that it may now be available through a separate statutory process. She acknowledged she needed to confirm this and said she would send the relevant information to the board. She proposed that if the tax can be pursued independently, the board might consider separating the two issues entirely, so the charter vote could focus solely on the structural governance changes — particularly the appointment authority — removing the tax as a point of contention.

Board Member Parizo expressed enthusiasm for the local option tax concept, drawing comparisons to tourism-heavy communities in Maine where taxes on restaurants and lodging are standard practice, and suggesting that given the significant increase in Route 2 traffic, Grand Isle may be leaving meaningful revenue on the table.

Discussion also touched on the broader issue of elected versus appointed positions. Board Member Parizo expressed concern that the pool of qualified candidates willing to run for positions such as Town Treasurer is shrinking as the community ages, and that municipal accounting requires specialized expertise that is not guaranteed in an elected candidate. He noted: "Our generation is aging out of these jobs," and emphasized the risk of having an unqualified person manage a ten-to-twelve million dollar budget.

Board Member Howrigan suggested that if the tax question can be separated from the charter vote, it might even be possible to put them on the ballot as two distinct questions, allowing voters to weigh in on each independently.

The board agreed to continue the discussion at a future meeting, with the following action items identified:

- Vice Chair Cochran to send the research on local option tax authority to the board.
- The board to explore outreach strategies to better inform the public about the purpose and necessity of the charter changes.

Board Member Parizo proposed a specific outreach action: working with Sara to prepare a summary of highlights from each meeting to submit to the Islander, which now publishes on Thursdays. He noted the Islander had publishes a "Grand Isle News" section and this would be an appropriate place for such info. Board members expressed broad agreement that this kind of regular, accessible communication would help ensure residents understand what the board is working on and why.

b. Sign Auditor contract

The auditor contract was presented for signature. Discussion arose briefly regarding the term length — the RFP had specified five years, though the contract itself did not state the term on its face. It was confirmed that the term and cost structure were contained in the RFP response documents.

> Motion to authorize the Chair to sign the auditor contract was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

The Chair and board members present signed the contract, with two copies noted.

c. RFP Proposals for Legal Services

Chair Morway reported that two responses were received to the RFP for legal services: one from the town's current attorneys, Stitzel, Page & Fletcher (SP&F), submitted digitally, and one inquiry from attorney Jim Barlow of Danville, which was not a formal submission. As a practical matter, SP&F was the only firm to submit a formal proposal.

Board Member Parizo moved to retain SP&F. However, during discussion, it was noted that the contract as submitted was for a three-year term, while the board had previously discussed and preferred a ten-year engagement to avoid the significant administrative burden of repeatedly going out to RFP for legal services. Chair Morway and others expressed that three years was not long enough given the complexity and institutional knowledge involved, and that SP&F would likely prefer the longer term as well.

The board agreed to table approval of the contract and directed Chair Morway to contact SP&F to request a ten-year term. The item will be brought back at the next meeting.

d. Municipal Energy Resilience Grant Program (MERP) estimates

Chair Morway provided an update on the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) grant, noting she had been copying the board on a series of email exchanges. She reported that she had inquired with the grant administrators as to whether the town was obligated to complete all items on the MERP project list, and was told definitively that it was not. The requirement was that at least one qualifying action be completed at each building, and the town has already satisfied that condition through completed work on the roof, solar, and lighting.

The question before the board was therefore whether to obligate remaining grant funds toward additional MERP project items — such as a heat pump water heater upgrade at the fire station — or to redirect those funds toward the solar project, which had been calculated to leave the town approximately $44,000 short of the maximum build cost, and where any unobligated MERP funds could be applied.

Board Member Bushway walked through some of the MERP project items he had been researching. He noted that the fire station's propane hot water heater, installed around 2018–2019, was still in good condition and likely sees limited use given the building's occupancy patterns. The contractors who inspected it noted it could be upgraded to a more efficient model, but found nothing wrong with the existing unit. Board Member Bushway expressed a preference for directing funds toward the solar project rather than these incremental building upgrades, citing the stronger long-term return on investment and the direct reduction in electrical costs across town buildings.

A separate item arose regarding a required emergency shutoff switch for the fire station boiler, estimated at $738. Board Member Bushway noted that two contractors who inspected the system did not see a code deficiency, but that Fire Chief Adam had raised the concern that the state fire marshal might take issue during annual inspections. The board reviewed available funds in the fire operations maintenance line — approximately $700 remaining as of the end of April, with two months left in the fiscal year — and noted there was also unspent capacity in the general repairs and maintenance budget. The consensus was that this work should proceed and could be coded to the appropriate maintenance line.

The overall board direction was to move forward with the solar project as the primary use of remaining MERP funds, removing the additional project items from the obligated scope. Chair Morway confirmed the grant deadline is December, consistent with all other MERP deliverables.

e. FPF donations

Chair Morway reported that she and Board Member Howrigan had both received phone calls from community members expressing concern about the $100 donation to Front Porch Forum (FPF) that had been approved at the prior meeting. The caller's objection was that Front Porch Forum is not a nonprofit — it is a business — and that approving a donation to a for-profit business sets a problematic precedent and differs from the process by which the town handles appropriations to organizations, which are brought before the voters.

Chair Morway acknowledged that the concern was valid and that the discussion at the prior meeting had moved quickly. She stated she takes responsibility for not slowing that conversation down. The check had already been issued and could not be recalled, but the board agreed it was a valuable lesson in deliberative process.

Board Member Howrigan echoed the sentiment, stating: "We just need to slow some of these discussions down a little bit sometimes."

Board Member Parizo offered additional context for his opposition at the prior meeting: he had personal experience with Front Porch Forum moderators declining to allow him to correct statements made about him in posts, which he characterized as an infringement on his First Amendment rights. He also noted that other community institutions — the Islander and the Lake Champlain Transportation authority — had not received similar donations, and argued that if the town were to support communications platforms, it should do so equitably.

The board pivoted to a broader discussion about communication strategy, including the following points and proposals:

- Board Member Parizo proposed that Sara prepare post-meeting summaries for submission to the Islander for inclusion in a revived "Grand Isle News" section, and that the same content be posted to Front Porch Forum.
- The board discussed the possibility of creating an official town Facebook page, noting that nearby towns including Alburgh, North Hero, and Milton use Facebook regularly to post agendas, road closure notices, and announcements.
- Board Member Bushway expressed support for social media outreach but noted the importance of having someone monitor and manage the page.
- The board agreed to add social media — specifically the creation of an official town Facebook page, and potentially Instagram — as a formal agenda item for a future meeting, with Chair Morway and the town administrator to prepare background information.
- Community member Esther Blow, attending via Zoom, had shared that she uses her personal Facebook page to post announcements for Fire District No. 4, as an example of the approach being used informally by town-affiliated entities already.

The item was tabled for continued discussion at a future meeting.

XIV. Executive Session

No executive session was held.

XV. Administrative Check-In

Chair Morway noted the following administrative follow-up items:

- She would contact Fire Chief Adam regarding the approved electrical outlet upgrade.
- She would contact town attorney regarding the legal services contract term.
- Vice Chair Cochran noted she would follow up on the monetary procurement policy research.

XVI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:10 PM was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.