

09-21-2026 Selectboard Meeting

Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2026, 6:00 PM

Grand Isle Selectboard — Public Hearing: Adoption of Town Charter

I. Open Public Hearing

The Chair opened the public hearing for the adoption of the Town Charter. Board members present were identified as Jeff Parizo, Ron Bushway, Jennifer Morway, Aimee Cochran, and Ellen Howrigan. Community members present in person included Jeanne Prouty, Peter Kirk, Linda Hansen, Lucille Campbell, Shannon Bundy, Colleen Bushway, Jim Hoag, Laura Jacobi, Michael Frett, Flora Bell, Jan Desarno, Melissa Howes, Rachael Griggs, Sue Lawrence, Judi Reposo, Melissa Boutin and Sara Santor. Community members attending via Zoom included Lynda Morgan Gardiner, and Esther Blow, who arrived during the hearing.

II. Discussion of Warned Article – Adoption of Town Charter

Chair Morway opened discussion by noting that no changes had been made to the charter since the last meeting and that no updated version had been distributed. The primary new information presented at this hearing concerned research into the anticipated costs associated with implementing the charter's proposed structural changes.

Cost Research: Tax Assessor

Chair Morway reported on outreach to the Town of Georgia, Vermont, which was identified at a recent roundtable as a comparable municipality with a functioning tax assessor model. Georgia has approximately 2,176 taxable parcels — roughly 700 parcels more than Grand Isle, though it was noted that Georgia likely carries a higher number of current-use parcels, making the comparison reasonably sound.

Chair Morway explained that Georgia had originally used a contracted tax assessor arrangement costing between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year. They subsequently transitioned to a part-time, directly hired assessor working one day per week for other towns as well, which brought costs down to between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually. That part-time salary figure includes a clerk or assistant position within the assessor's budget. Chair Morway noted some candid surprise at this: "I never believe the idea that it's going to cost less, but what we're seeing for comps on what people are paying, it looks like it's not necessarily going to be an increase."

Referencing the FY2027 listers budget salary line of \$45,000, Chair Morway concluded that if the contracted assessor option (the more expensive route) were chosen at a high estimate of \$50,000, and the listers position were eliminated, the net increase to the town would be approximately \$5,000. Under a directly hired arrangement comparable to Georgia's, the position could conceivably cost less than what is currently budgeted for listers.

Cost Research: Town Clerk and Town Treasurer

Chair Morway then presented proposed budget figures provided by Town Clerk/Treasurer Melissa Boutin, who was present. It was emphasized throughout that these figures are proposed, not approved, as budget season has not yet begun.

For FY2028, the proposed budget for the combined town clerk/town treasurer department — assuming no structural changes — reflects an increase of \$18,925 over the current year. If the charter were to pass

and the positions were formally split, the proposed increase rises to \$27,145, representing a net difference of \$8,220 attributable to the structural change.

In the current FY2027 budget, the elected town clerk salary stands at \$53,045 and the assistant is budgeted at \$30,822. The treasurer salary is \$29,355 and the assistant is \$17,408. Both the clerk and treasurer roles are salaried elected positions, while the assistant positions are hourly. Town Clerk/Treasurer Boutin noted that in FY2027, the assistant's hours were already increased to qualify for health insurance, dental, and retirement benefits — meaning those costs were already absorbed in the prior year's budget and represented a smaller marginal increase going into FY2028.

Community member Melissa Howes sought clarification on the current arrangement. Chair Morway explained that right now, one person — Melissa — holds both the town clerk and town treasurer roles simultaneously, with one assistant supporting both functions. Under the charter, the two positions would be formally separated: the town clerk would remain an elected position, while the town treasurer would become an appointed/hired position. Melissa, as the current holder, would continue through the remainder of her term and would be the top candidate for the appointed treasurer role. The town clerk job would then appear on the ballot for a separate candidate.

Under this arrangement, the respective officeholders would serve as each other's assistant: the town clerk would be the assistant town treasurer and vice versa. Melissa confirmed this, saying: "Essentially, my primary focus is going to be all in treasurer work instead of treasurer work and clerk work. And then having an assistant that I can give things to when I can't. That person would take on the role of being the primary town clerk, and I would be their assistant as needed."

Chair Morway observed that combined costs for the two highest-cost changes — the treasurer split and the assessor — would amount to a total maximum increase of approximately \$13,220 to the general fund.

Discussion: Qualifications and the Election Question

A substantive portion of the discussion focused on the difference between elected and appointed positions in terms of qualifications. Chair Morway articulated the core concern: when a position is elected, there are no minimum professional qualifications required by law, beyond what state statute specifies. When a position is appointed or hired, the town can set its own job description with specific prerequisites — such as an accounting degree or prior municipal finance experience. Chair Morway stated plainly: "The municipal world is so much different now... You can't just go in anymore and jump in and be able to try to help your community."

Chair Morway continued, noting that approving a high salary for a position that legally has no qualification requirements — one that appears on a ballot and could be won by any resident — presents a governance challenge. "If you start putting down a salary of what Melissa should be making without any sort of qualifications. The constant apprehension by the boards to be able to approve a really high dollar amount for a town treasurer position that doesn't need any of those qualifications and now will be on a ballot is worrisome."

Community member Rachael Griggs pushed back, arguing that it was difficult to imagine anyone stepping into the role without adequate knowledge, and noting that state agencies provide support. She questioned whether the charter was actually necessary to achieve the desired separation of positions, suggesting that Melissa could run solely for town treasurer under the current structure and someone else could run for town clerk without any charter change. Chair Morway acknowledged this but reiterated that the key distinction lies in whether a meaningful job description with professional requirements can be enforced when the position is elected.

Discussion: Security of Melissa's Position

Community member Shannon Bundy raised concern about what would happen to Melissa specifically if the charter were adopted and her term ended. Chair Morway explained that the charter language was written so that whoever currently holds the position would continue through the end of their term — and since Melissa's term expires in March, she would serve out that term. After that, the position would be

posted as an open hired role, and she would be fully eligible to apply. Chair Morway stated: "Everyone on this board has said that they would hire Melissa — she would be the person that they would hire."

However, she was careful to note that a guarantee could not be made, since a new board would be making that hiring decision and there is still an election between now and then. The concern was raised: if the charter had language automatically appointing the current officeholder into the new hired role, and if someone other than Melissa were to win the March election before the charter took effect, that could create a problematic situation. Chair Morway noted: "I would find it very hard to believe that if the job was posted and Melissa wasn't hired, there wouldn't be pitchforks in here at the board."

Community member Melissa Howes expressed broader opposition to the concept of moving the treasurer into an appointed role, stating a preference for preserving the electoral relationship between the position and the residents: "I have more faith in my fellow residents in Grand Isle in picking this position... I don't think that's any particular knowledge that the board has over the residents." She also voiced concern about the historical treatment of Melissa by prior boards and characterized the ongoing effort to move the treasurer to an appointed position as puzzling given repeated community opposition.

Remote Comment from Lynda Morgan Gardiner (Lister)

Lynda Morgan Gardiner, attending via Zoom and identified as a current lister, offered a perspective that was notable for its candor. She stated that she did not wish the discussion to be taken personally, noting: "This is about what's best for the town." She confirmed that she herself would potentially be affected by the charter — her own position as lister would change — but said she was at peace with that. She praised Melissa's work and emphasized that no one in the discussions over the preceding months had said anything negative about Melissa's performance. She spoke to the growing educational demands of the lister role: "The listers position has huge educational requirements now. And do I think I'm gonna get them all done? Probably not. I cannot be elected." She urged the board and public to depersonalize the conversation: "Any change is gonna make people fearful."

Closing of Public Hearing

Board Member Jeff Parizo moved to close the public hearing on the charter discussion. The motion was seconded by Board member Ron Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

Grand Isle Selectboard Meeting — Monday, September 21, 2026

I. Call to Order

The Grand Isle Selectboard Meeting for Monday, September 21, 2026, was called to order.

Present: Jeff Parizo, Ron Bushway, Jennifer Morway, Amy Cochran, Ellen Howrigan,

Community Members Present: Jeanne Prouty, Peter Kirk, Linda Hansen, Lucille Campbell, Colleen Bushway, Jim Hoag, Shannon Bundy, Laura Jacobi, Judi Reposo, Michael Frett, Flora Bell, Jan Desarno, Rachael Griggs, Sue Lawrence, Melissa Boutin, Sara Santor

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

II. Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

Two amendments to the agenda were requested and accepted. First, a Vice Chair Cochran requested the addition of information regarding grants for radar speed signs, to be placed under Old Business. Second, Board member Howrigan requested that the agenda item regarding the future use of the current library building (item XIII.b.) be moved up to be heard immediately following Guests, to allow for earlier action. Both amendments were accepted by consensus. Additionally, an executive session was added to the end of the meeting, without a decision to follow.

III. Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

IV. Review and Approve Minutes

a. 08/31/26 Minutes

Board Member Jeff Parizo moved that the Chair sign the minutes from August 31, 2026. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Cochran. The motion carried. Note: Board Member Ellen Howrigan did not vote, as she was not present at the August 31st meeting.

V. Guests

No guests were present for the meeting.

XIII. Old Business (taken out of order)

b. Future Use of Current Library Building – Potential Action

This item was moved earlier on the agenda at the request of Board member Howrigan. Board Member Howrigan opened by sharing her perspective, stating that she had given the topic considerable thought and had concluded that the board was moving too quickly. She recommended tabling the discussion entirely until the new library construction is complete, the current library building has been vacated and cleaned out, and the board can revisit the question with fuller information and more deliberate consideration. She indicated there had been other uses suggested through community comments beyond the historical society's museum proposal, and she did not believe a decision needed to be rushed.

Discussion among board members and community members followed. Chair Morway provided context on what had been heard from the community: during the town plan open meeting process, one of the most consistent themes raised by residents was the lack of a communal gathering space in Grand Isle. Community space had originally been included in the new library grant application but was the first item removed when the budget needed to be trimmed, as the grant was specifically designated for library purposes. The fire station community space is seeing heavy use, which was cited as evidence of genuine demand.

Chair Morway noted that the historical society itself had previously indicated — on at least two occasions, including one meeting before the arrival of a key donor — that it did not have the bandwidth to take on additional space or responsibilities. That changed when Sally Picard became involved, bringing with her a substantial collection of historical artifacts. Peter Kirk was also noted as having items.

Chair Morway raised the point that the town already funds two buildings for the historical society, and that many other community groups and residents do not have comparable access to dedicated space. She emphasized that it would be irresponsible to commit the building's future use without broader input and more time for reflection.

Lucille Campbell, a member of the historical society, acknowledged the board's perspective and proposed the formation of a committee including selectboard members, historical society members, and townspeople to discuss shared costs, responsibilities, and goals before any final decision. Chair Morway expressed reservation about formal committees given quorum concerns, but agreed that broader community input is warranted when the discussion resumes.

It was noted that regardless of ultimate use, the building will require repairs and updates, and that historic preservation grants — such as those available through the Vermont Preservation Trust — would be available as a municipal building regardless of the occupant, though portions of the building that have been modified over time may not qualify for all preservation funding.

Jim Hoag, a member from the historical society asked how the conversation would be reinitiated. Chair Morway indicated that once the library's move is confirmed — expected by the end of December — the item would be returned to the agenda, likely in December or January.

Board Member Ellen Howrigan moved to table the discussion of the future use of the current library building until after the library is empty and cleaned out, at which point the board will determine the

appropriate use. The motion was seconded by Board Member Ron Bushway, who agreed the board had been moving too quickly on the matter. The motion carried.

VI. Review and Sign Warrants

Board Member Jeff Parizo moved that the Chair sign the warrants. The motion was seconded by vice Chair Cochran. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. Financials

Chair Morway reported that Town Treasurer Melissa Boutin has completed the annual audit with Sullivan Powers, and that draft year-end figures for FY2026 have been distributed to the board. As the full financials had only recently been sent out and not all members had fully reviewed them, the board agreed to conduct a thorough financial review at the next meeting, at which point the current-year figures should also be available. The updated delinquent tax balance was reported at \$177,685, which was noted as a significant improvement. No further questions were raised.

VIII. Highway Department Update

Buildings and Facilities Manager Bushway delivered the highway report on behalf of Highway Foreman Steve More. The following updates were provided:

Recent work included ditching and replacement of the cover on Adams School Road. The new truck has been returned to Charlebois for a recall repair. The Number 2 truck's hydraulic piston is being rebuilt; while out of service, it is also being serviced and inspected. The Number 3 truck remains operational. The new tractor has been returned to CCR due to a malfunction with the three-point hitch, which is not raising properly. Roadside mowing with the Kubota tractor is ongoing. The department has been hauling material to the new library site as needed. Brush cutting has been active. The department has begun hauling winter sand in preparation for the season.

A matter was raised regarding paint damage to a resident's vehicle during road line painting on West Shore Road. As the line painting is contracted out — though the town contracts the company — the Buildings and Facilities Manager consulted with John Wilkin, who requested all available information so that he could handle the matter directly.

Paving work is scheduled to begin Wednesday to cover three hydrant covers that were recently replaced, with the possibility of running into Thursday depending on staffing.

IX. Buildings Facilities Manager Update

Buildings and Facilities Manager Bushway reported that an on-demand hot water heater in the basement of the town office had been leaking and was shut down approximately two weeks prior. A plumber from Bernie Gage Plumbing came in the day of the meeting and replaced the unit; however, the new unit was found to be leaking as well. The plumber was expected to return and address the issue. A shut-off valve was installed during the replacement, allowing the heater to be isolated without shutting off water to the entire building. The board was assured the situation would be monitored before the end of the evening.

Additionally, furnace and boiler servicing and tune-ups at all town buildings are scheduled to begin October 13th.

X. Library Update

Board member Parizo provided a comprehensive construction progress report on the new library:

The first coat of interior paint has been applied. Grid work for the suspended ceiling was expected to begin the following day or Thursday. Once the ceiling is complete, HVAC and electrical connections will proceed. Full permanent power to the building was anticipated by Friday, when the electrician is scheduled to energize the building and test all systems. Four electricians will coordinate simultaneously — one for the power company, one for the building, one for solar, and one for the generator. The base coat of pavement has been laid, with the finish coat expected the following day or Wednesday. Siding work is progressing and anticipated to be complete by end of week. Both sets of storefront doors — the

exterior set and the interior vestibule set — are installed. Finished grading, including topsoil, seed, and mulch, is expected to be completed by end of week. Light pole installation is planned for the following week. The generator will be permanently connected when the building is energized.

Board member Parizo summarized: "It's going fast, and it's progressing pretty rapidly."

a. Authorize \$22,405.69 Reimbursement to Library for Their Advance to the Town

Board member Parizo raised a longstanding financial obligation to the Grand Isle Library. He explained that on March 11, 2020, the library board voted to advance \$14,800 to the town to keep the library building project moving. Subsequent records from June 19, 2023, show that the total amount advanced by the library — including \$14,905.16 for the initial architect payment and \$7,500 for engineering (half of a \$25,000 East Engineering contract) — was \$22,405.69 (subsequently noted by Melissa as \$22,405.68 based on her check records).

Board member Parizo stated he had believed this had been repaid at some point, but after reviewing the minutes from 2020 through 2024 and consulting with Town Treasurer Boutin, no record of repayment could be found. He stated plainly: "I wanna do what we had said to do." He noted that prior boards had repeatedly committed to repaying the library and that the current unassigned fund balance — reported at \$466,610 — is more than sufficient to cover the payment. Board member Howrigan agreed that the funds should come from unassigned funds rather than reserves. Treasurer Boutin confirmed that her records showed no repayment had ever been made, and former Library Commission Treasurer Colleen Bushway, who was present, confirmed she had never seen a check for this amount.

Board Member Parizo moved to authorize reimbursement of \$22,405.68 (per Treasurer Boutin's check records) to the Grand Isle Library from the town's unassigned funds, in repayment of the library's advance to the town. The motion was seconded by Board member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

Board member Parizo requested that Treasurer Boutin coordinate directly with Library Treasurer Karen Allen to arrange pickup of the check.

XI. IT Update

Selectboard Administrator Santor shared that the new town website is nearly complete. The next steps are to share access with relevant users — including the listers, town treasurer, zoning administrator, library, planning commission, and DRB — set up user training, and potentially go live prior to the training so that users have time to explore the site and identify any issues before the formal training session.

XII. New Business

a. Sign Grant Agreement for Highway Department Grant GR2103 – 2026 VT Small Scale Local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

Board Member Howrigan moved that the Chair sign the grant agreement for highway department grant GR2103 — 2026 VT Small Scale Local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). The motion was seconded by Board member Parizo. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Listers – E&O for Round Barn

Town Lister Sue Lawrence presented the listers' errors and omissions (E&O) correction for the Round Barn property. She explained that the Round Barn is assessed using an income approach, as is the town's low-income housing. In reviewing the figures, it was discovered that the listers had inadvertently applied a conservation land reduction to the Round Barn's assessed value — a reduction that is applicable to properties like Ciarra Drive under a different low-income housing methodology, but should not have been applied to the Round Barn. The error resulted in a double reduction in the property's favor. Approval of the E&O would authorize Melissa to issue a revised tax bill to the Round Barn, resulting in a higher balance owed to the town. The Round Barn has not yet been notified, as the correction had not yet been formally approved.

Board Member Parizo moved to approve the listers' errors and omissions correction for the Round Barn. The motion was seconded by Board member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

It was noted that the E&O form requires signatures from all board members, and the document was passed around for signatures accordingly.

XIII. Old Business (continued)

a. Pending Outcomes of Public Hearing, Approve Official Warning for Charter Ballot Item

Following the close of the public hearing earlier in the evening, the board proceeded to act on the charter. The Chair asked board members to state where they stood. The discussion was brief, as the public hearing had thoroughly aired the issues. The board then considered and passed a series of related motions required by the town attorney to properly place the charter on the ballot.

Board member Parizo moved to approve the draft Town Charter proposed date August 17, 2026, and to put it before the voters for approval at a special town meeting to be held on November 3rd, 2026. The motion was seconded by Board member Howrigan. The motion carried 4-1, with Board Member Bushway voting no.

Board Member Parizo moved to find that the Selectboard draft Town Charter proposal dated August 17, 2026 is too long and unwieldy to be shown on the ballot and in the special town meeting warning in its amended form, and that the Select Board will therefore vote on the draft Town Charter in its entirety in the form of a yes or no proposition. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Cochran. The motion carried unanimously.

Board member Parizo moved to hold a special town meeting on November 3rd, 2026 and to approve the warning for the same, containing a single article to vote on the adoption of the draft Town Charter proposal dated August 17, 2026 in its entirety in the form of a yes or no proposition. The motion was seconded by Board member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Morway moved that the public informational meeting, as required for Australian ballot votes prior to the special town meeting, be held on Monday, November 2nd, 2026 at 6:00 PM at the town office. The motion was seconded by Board member Parizo. The motion carried unanimously.

It was noted that the official warning document required signatures from all board members present.

c. Approve Updated Job Description for Zoning Administrator

Chair Morway noted that the updated job description for the Zoning Administrator had been emailed to the board shortly before the meeting. The only substantive change was the addition of language related to remote work, phrased as an "as needed" provision. The board was satisfied with the amendment.

Vice Chair Cochran moved to approve the updated job description for the Zoning Administrator. The motion was seconded Board member Parizo. The motion carried unanimously.

Note: Radar Speed Sign Grant Update (added under Old Business during agenda amendment) — Vice Chair Cochran reported that research into available grant programs for the proposed radar speed sign revealed that all currently identified grant programs are closed. The earliest reopening is January, with another opening in April. Vice Chair Cochran noted she has identified three to four potential grant programs and has two quotes on file, though fresh quotes will likely be needed by the time applications open. A discussion briefly touched on the need for a VTrans permit as well. The board acknowledged the update and agreed to revisit the matter when the grant windows reopen.

XIV. Executive Session

Select Board Member Jennifer Morway moved to enter into executive session at 7:26 pm to discuss easement removal, citing 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1), on the grounds that premature general public

knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded Board member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

The board entered executive session. All non-board members were excused.

Upon conclusion of the executive session, Board Member Parizo moved to come out of executive session with no decision at 7:46pm. The motion was seconded by Board member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

XV. Administrative Check-In

No administrative check-in items were raised.

XVI. Adjournment

Board Member Parizo moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded was Board member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 PM.