

# 10-5-2026 Selectboard Meeting

## Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2026, 6:00 PM

### DRAFT

#### I. Call to Order

Chair Jennifer Morway called the Grand Isle Selectboard Meeting to order for Monday, October 5, 2026, at 6:00 PM at 9 Hyde Road, Grand Isle, Vermont, and via Zoom.

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

Community Members Present: Collen Bushway, Rachael Griggs, Nick DeMarco, Misch Norooni, Sue Lawrence, Steven More, Desiree More, Ryan Bullis, Sarah Bullis, Liam Bullis, Dwight Bullis, Melissa Boutin, Sara Santor

Community Members via Zoom: Lynda Morgan Gardner, Lucille Campbell, Esther Blow, Diane Cota, Jonathan Debono, Michael Miller

#### II. Amend Agenda for Matters NOT Listed

Chair Morway opened the floor for agenda amendments. She noted that the August FY2027 financials would be tabled, as they were not yet complete, and that the July FY2027 financials would still be reviewed. She also announced the addition of agenda item VII.c — the renewal of Transfer Station CD number 1007 — under Financials. No other amendments were offered by board members.

#### III. Public Comment

##### Charter Questions

Community members Sarah Bullis and Rachael Griggs, along with Zoom participant Lynda Morgan Gardner, raised questions and comments regarding the proposed town charter. The discussion was wide-ranging and substantive, touching on motivation, scope, transparency, and community concern.

Lynda Morgan Gardner opened by asking whether the proposed charter would appear on the ballot she had just received in the mail. Chair Morway deferred to Town Clerk/Treasurer Melissa Boutin to address the elections context. Melissa explained that there are two separate elections occurring: a state election, which generated the ballot already mailed to active voters, and a local special town meeting on the charter, which is a distinct process. She clarified that in order for the charter question to have been included on the state-generated ballot, action would have needed to be taken before August. She noted that mailing the charter ballot to all 1,700-plus active voters would be a significant undertaking — requiring the board's direction — involving printing ballots, addressing and sending envelopes, and processing returns. She confirmed that residents could vote on the charter question absentee, in person on Election Day, or by coming into the town office to vote early if they requested it.

Chair Morway suggested that the question of whether to mail the charter ballot to all voters should be added to the next meeting's agenda or possibly addressed via a special meeting, given the proximity of the election — approximately four weeks away. The Board agreed that waiting two weeks might be too long. Chair Morway proposed working with Sara at the close of the meeting to identify possible special meeting dates and community outreach.

## Charter Discussion — Overview and Rationale

Chair Morway then provided a broad overview of the charter's origins and intent. She explained that the charter discussion began again largely due to the ongoing difficulty filling the Board of Listers, which is statutorily required to have three members but currently has only two, with the position vacant for nearly six months. She noted that the state has been pushing municipalities toward a tax assessor model, with increasing training and certification requirements for listers making it difficult to attract candidates willing to serve in the elected, part-time role.

Morway explained that the charter proposes two significant structural changes related to town positions: (1) transitioning the town treasurer from an elected to an appointed, full-time position; and (2) creating a pathway for the Board of Listers to eventually be dissolved in favor of a hired tax assessor — at such time as the listers themselves signal readiness for that transition, and with the reappraisal expected to be completed by approximately the following summer. She emphasized that the listers have indicated a willingness to remain through the completion of the reappraisal.

She also noted that the charter adds a provision allowing voters to remove any elected official, which she described as a checks-and-balances measure to address the concern that converting the treasurer to an appointed position removes a voter right. "Before, if the selectboard was to do something that somebody didn't like, you're kind of stuck with those people for three years," she explained, adding that any decision by the selectboard — including decisions related to the town treasurer — must be made by majority vote in a public meeting. "I can't make a decision. Amy can't. Ellen can't. No one can make a decision. It has to be in public by a majority vote."

Melissa added context regarding the increasing state-level requirements affecting both her role and the listers' responsibilities. She noted that the workload associated with the town treasurer position has grown substantially, particularly given multiple active grant projects, the ongoing townwide reappraisal, and a new library construction project. "I don't have enough time in the day to do all the work that needs to be done on the treasurer side of things as well as the clerk side of things," she said. She mentioned working on weekends regularly and noted that even with additional part-time help from staff member Terri, not all work can be covered.

Board Member Parizo elaborated on the financial management dimension of the charter discussion, noting that the town's combined budget — municipal and school — is approximately \$12,000,000. He argued that someone managing that level of funding should have verified qualifications, which cannot currently be guaranteed through an elected position. "If Melissa retires, and somebody runs for her position, they only have to be on the ballot. There's no qualifications that would guarantee they would know how to manage the money." He cited the library construction project as a concrete example of workload that a qualified full-time treasurer could take on formally, rather than relying on volunteer-style grant administration by select board members.

## Community Questions and Concerns

Community member Sarah Bullis expressed uncertainty about what the charter might enable beyond its stated purposes, referencing the Town of Essex as an example of a selectboard making a significant land use decision on behalf of the entire community. Chair Morway clarified that the Essex situation involved the planning board, not a charter, and emphasized that the Grand Isle charter, as written, does not grant the selectboard any powers beyond what state statute already provides. She further noted that any future changes to the charter would require a townwide vote and approval by the state legislature.

Bullis also asked whether selectboard votes would be transparent under the charter. Morway confirmed that all votes must be conducted in public, and that roll call votes can be used to put individual members' positions on record.

Community member Rachael Griggs said she found the state's online information somewhat confusing and asked why it would not be possible to have both an assessor and a board of listers simultaneously. Chair Morway clarified that while legally possible, having both would result in double the salary cost, which was not financially prudent for a small town. She explained that under the assessor model, the assessor would perform day-to-day work and receive a salary, and if a board of Listers remained it would

serve in a smaller capacity — signing off on the grand list — and would likely receive little or no compensation.

Lister Sue Lawrence added helpful context from her experience, noting that some towns maintain a board of listers alongside an assessor, with the listers serving primarily to sign off on the grand list while the assessor handles daily operations. She also noted that North Hero had previously used a consulting assessor who worked for multiple towns on a part-time basis, which had been very effective. She acknowledged the difficulty of the state's emerging certification requirement for listers: "How are you gonna demand that an elected official has to have certification? Because you don't." She also noted that the current lister vacancy has persisted for nearly six months, and that in theory, all three lister positions could turn over within a year.

Community member Nick DeMarco asked whether there was a way to make the town treasurer a full-time position without a charter. Chair Morway explained that the treasurer could theoretically run for election as a full-time candidate, but the core issue is that the board cannot attach qualifications or salary requirements to an elected position. Making it an appointed position is the mechanism by which the town can both pay it appropriately and require relevant qualifications. Vice Chair Aimee Cochran also clarified the transition process: if the charter passes and Melissa wins her concurrent election for treasurer, she would serve out her three-year term and then be considered through a formal hiring process at its conclusion.

Board Member Parizo reiterated emphatically that the charter is not an effort by the selectboard to accumulate power. "We're not grabbing any power. Our rules are state statute... We put budgets together that everyone votes on. It's on the March ballot. At the end of the day, the voters decide how much money a town's gonna spend." He noted that board members are not lifetime appointees and can always be voted out.

## Additional Public Comment

Board member Howrigan noted that she had removed a "Vote No Charter" sign from the entrance of the church, as she believed it may have been improperly placed on what is considered public/court property. She made the sign available for its owners to retrieve. Community member Rachael Griggs indicated that she had no knowledge of who placed the sign there.

## IV. Review and Approve Minutes

### a. 09/21/26 Minutes

Motion to authorize the chair to sign the minutes of September 21, 2026, with any corrections, was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

## V. Guests

The board noted a guest in attendance — Nick Demarco of Adams School Road — and agreed to address his matter during the Highway Department Update.

## VI. Review and Sign Warrants

Motion to authorize the chair to sign the warrants was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

## VII. Financials

## a. Review Year-End Figures for FY2026

Chair Morway invited questions on the year-end FY2026 financials. Board Member Parizo noted he had a question about the unassigned fund balance but Melissa had already addressed prior to the meeting. Chair Morway and Melissa clarified for the record that the unassigned fund balance of approximately \$328,000 already reflects earmarked amounts — including IT expenses and town charter attorney fees that had been set aside in a prior year but not yet expended. Chair Morway noted that the board can decide at the next meeting whether to retain those earmarks or return the funds, particularly in light of the pending IT RFP results. No further questions were raised on the year-end figures.

## b. Review July and August FY2027 Financials

Chair Morway confirmed that only the July FY2027 financials were available for review, as the August financials were not yet complete and would be tabled. Board members indicated they had reviewed the July figures and had no questions. The financials were noted without objection.

## c. Transfer Station CD #1007 Renewal

Chair Morway introduced the renewal of Transfer Station CD number 1007, noting it had matured on September 26 and was being held pending the board's direction. She asked Highway Foreman Steve More whether any significant capital expenditures were anticipated for the transfer station that might warrant liquidating the CD. He indicated there was nothing anticipated at this point, though the hypothetical purchase of a spare scale was briefly mentioned and set aside as not imminent.

Melissa provided updated rate information. She noted that Northfield Savings rates had remained unchanged from what she had circulated the previous day, but that overnight, North Country Credit Union — where the CD is currently held — had reduced its rate on both the 6-month and 12-month terms from 3.9 percent to 3.85 percent. Board member Parizo suggested renewing for 12 months at the available rate, noting that a reserve fund maintained separately from the CD provides sufficient liquidity. The board agreed.

Motion to renew CD #1007 at North Country Credit Union for a 12-month term at 3.85 percent, or whatever the prevailing rate is at the time of renewal, was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously.

## VIII. Highway Department Update

### Guest: Nick DeMarco — Cedar Trees at 83 Adams School Road

Nick Marco addressed the board regarding approximately twelve cedar trees located within the town right-of-way in front of his property at 83 Adams School Road. He stated that he had measured the trees to be approximately 18 feet from the center of the road on average, and that there appeared to be five to six feet of clearance between the tree line and the traveled way — sufficient, in his view, for pedestrian passage. He noted that the roadside vegetation had already been trimmed by the town's mowing contractor, and that the cleared appearance made the situation look materially different from how it appeared before mowing. He referenced photographs he had submitted to Chair Morway illustrating the current conditions.

DeMarco's request was that the highway foreman use best judgment to remove only those trees that are visibly leaning into the road, while leaving the others standing — at least for the current season — so the board and foreman could assess the situation and determine whether further removal was warranted. He acknowledged the town's need to apply consistent standards across all properties and expressed understanding of that constraint.

Chair Morway responded by providing broader context. She noted that the town has been including notices in tax bills for approximately two years to alert property owners to right-of-way vegetation concerns. She outlined three primary reasons the board is focused on right-of-way clearance: pedestrian and cyclist safety on roads that are at or near minimum width; sight-line clearance for drivers; and

ditching, which is critical to drainage on an island environment. She also noted a significant operational concern: cedar trees in the right-of-way can be difficult to see from plow trucks during heavy snowfall and can damage equipment or cause accidents during winter operations. "You get a lot of snow, and all of a sudden it's really tough to see. And these trees can literally spin the trucks."

Board Member Parizo acknowledged that the lack of road width is a real and ongoing issue across the town, affecting pedestrians, cyclists, and strollers. He noted that any future road-widening or bike path project would likely require removal of roadside trees on the flat side of the road. He emphasized that the board's intent is not to single out any individual property but to develop a consistent policy applicable to all properties.

Morway informed DeMarco that the board would be discussing the broader right-of-way policy in executive session that evening and that Highway Foreman More would follow up with him directly after a decision had been made. She invited him to return to a future meeting if he remained unsatisfied with the outcome. DeMarco expressed understanding and appreciation, stating he would await Steve's contact.

Highway Foreman More then provided his regular update:

- Winter Sand: Hauling of winter sand was ongoing and expected to be complete the following week.
- Library Topsoil: All topsoil had been hauled to the library site. One additional load of drip stone remained to be delivered.
- Road Grading: Three roads were graded during the week — the transfer station road, the hatchery road, and Adams Landing. Lovers Lane was in good condition and left for the season.
- Equipment: The 2013 truck had an air compressor failure and was repaired at the garage; it was back in service. The recalled new truck had also been returned from the manufacturer and was operational. The 2015 truck remained out of service, with the piston awaiting repair at Munson's — the only shop available after the original vendor was booked out longer.
- Ash Tree Removal — Funding Request: Foreman More raised the question of whether the highway department could be compensated from the ash tree removal reserve fund for labor and equipment costs when department employees perform ash tree work directly, rather than contracting it out to a tree service. He noted that this could result in significant cost savings while still accomplishing the work. Board Member Parizo expressed strong support, noting that the highway department doing the work in-house is no different in principle from how other town departments use their budgeted funds. The board agreed that so long as budget remained for contracted tree service for dangerous or complex removals (e.g., near utility lines), internal labor and associated costs for ash tree removal could be drawn from the ash tree fund. Morway noted the importance of placing the authorization on the record formally.

Motion to authorize the use of ash tree removal funds by the highway department for ash tree removal projects undertaken directly by department staff was made by Board member Howrigan and seconded by Board Member Parizo. The motion carried unanimously, with Treasurer Boutin indicating agreement.

- Driver/Tractor Hydraulic Pump: A separate issue with the driver/tractor was raised regarding a missing back cap and hydraulic pump. Board Member Parizo asked Foreman More to call him the following day to discuss the matter outside of the meeting.

Board member Parizo noted that on balance, the highway department had accomplished more than anticipated for the year — ahead on brush cutting, coverage changes completed, and early progress on multi-year plans. Foreman More agreed, expressing satisfaction with the department's progress.

## IX. Buildings Facilities Manager Update

Board Member Bushway reported on a recent visit by Zander, a building inspector, who had toured the highway garage and transfer station at the board's invitation. The visit was prompted by information that

Vermont OSHA is actively inspecting all municipal buildings statewide within the next approximately 18 months, with a directive to issue fines for any violations found — with little tolerance for non-compliance.

At the garage, the findings were largely minor — a cracked extension cord, small housekeeping items — with no major violations. At the transfer station, the primary concerns were: (1) a heater in the recycling center warming shack powered by an extension cord (OSHA does not permit extension cords in permanent service applications); (2) insufficient lighting in the recycling center; and (3) the absence of an adequate barrier wall or guardrail beside the waste compaction area. Corrective actions underway include: scheduling an electrician (Hegeman Electric) to hard-wire an outlet and install three new cold-weather-rated lights in the recycling center the following Tuesday; and planning construction of a knee wall or guardrail at the compaction area.

Board members Bushway and Parizo noted that Zander had indicated municipalities are being inspected without warning, and that inspectors have the authority to seek a court order for access if a facility is unstaffed. One neighboring town was reportedly facing a fine in the six-digit range. Another town received a \$1,500 fine for a sump pump connected to an extension cord. Parizo expressed concern and stated his intent to raise the issue with state legislators: "I think it's ridiculous that Vermont's coming at their municipalities" with heavy fines.

Parizo encouraged Foreman More and Board member Bushway to walk through all town-owned buildings with Zander's checklist in mind, noting that the scope includes all town-owned structures — the old library, and any others covered under the town's insurance policy.

## X. Library Update

Board Member Parizo reported that the east side exterior of the new library building appeared to be complete with board and batten siding. Interior work was progressing, with infrastructure connections underway, ceiling tiling completed over the prior Saturday, and interior trim being installed on exterior doors by contractor Chris. A question was raised about a bicycle rack; Collen Bushway confirmed that the existing bike rack, picnic table, and bench from the current site would be relocated to the new library — anticipated in the spring.

## XI. IT Update

Vice Chair Cochran reported that a staff training session on the new website platform was scheduled for Wednesday, with the site expected to go live shortly thereafter. Chair Morway also provided an update on the IT services RFP process: four companies had now come on-site for walkthroughs, with additional respondents having submitted proposals without an on-site visit. All RFP submissions are due to Sara Santor by the following Friday. Morway expressed hope that the board could make a decision at the next Monday's meeting, as the board would need to provide timely notice of termination to the current IT provider. She asked Santor to flag which companies had visited on-site versus submitted remotely, to assist the board in its evaluation.

## XII. New Business

### a. Listers

#### i. E&O (Errors & Omissions) – VT Transco LLC, VT Electric Co-op, Inc., Round Barn

Lister Sue Lawrence presented three errors and omissions requiring board approval. She explained that utility property valuations, previously reported directly by the utility companies, are now administered through the state via a program called VP PIE. As a result of not recognizing that updated numbers had been entered into VP PIE for the current year, last year's figures were inadvertently used in the grand list.

The resulting corrections were as follows:

- Vermont Transco LLC: A decrease of \$1,108,000 from the listed value.
- Vermont Electric Co-op, Inc.: An increase of \$221,500.
- Round Barn Housing LP: An increase of \$288,000, correcting an error in which a \$62,000 HUD-related subsidy component had been omitted from the calculation, raising the assessed value from \$657,900 to \$945,900.

Board Member Howrigan calculated that the net effect of the three corrections was a reduction of approximately \$598,500 in the grand list. Town Clerk Boutin acknowledged the impact, stating she would prepare a revised analysis showing what the shortfall would mean relative to the budgeted tax levy, and would share it with the board. She noted the town would likely take in meaningfully less than planned.

The board expressed frustration with the ongoing trend of utility valuations declining, though acknowledged the corrections had to be approved.

Motion to approve Vermont Form PVR-4261E errors and omissions for Vermont Transco LLC, Vermont Electric Co-op, Inc., and Round Barn Housing LP was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

## ii. E-911 renumbering of Faywood Road

Lister Lawrence explained that correspondence from representatives of the Round Barn development project prompted her to contact Tyler, the state E-911 coordinator, regarding the current address numbering on Faywood Road. Tyler indicated that the road should be renumbered comprehensively. The primary concern is that current addresses using alphabetic suffixes (e.g., "19A") are not recognized by the 911 dispatch system, which accepts numbers only. This means emergency responders could be directed to an incorrect or unrecognized location.

Lawrence noted that Tyler had already assigned numbers for the Round Barn annex and new addition building (approximately 611 and 615, respectively), with the round barn itself likely to be assigned 609. These new numbers fall in the middle of the road's existing sequence, making a full road renumbering logistically preferable to leaving a patchwork of old and new numbers in place. She compared the situation to a prior renumbering undertaken in the town of Alburgh.

Chair Morway acknowledged that renumbering is not a welcome imposition on residents but noted the board did not see a way around it given the 911 safety concern. She asked about the timeline and process, noting that residents would need to be notified by letter. The board agreed that the number of affected properties — estimated at roughly 12-20 — was manageable. The consensus was that the renumbering should proceed before the Round Barn construction introduces additional complexity.

Motion to authorize the listers to proceed with E-911 renumbering of Faywood Road was made by Board Member Parizo and seconded by Board Member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

## b. Proposed Library MOU

Chair Morway reported that a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the town and the library had been drafted by the town attorney and circulated to board members. She indicated she did not intend to seek formal approval at this meeting; rather, the goal was to confirm that the board was comfortable transmitting the draft to the library board for their review and proposed edits.

Morway noted that several paragraphs in the attorney's draft address library director governance and internal operations in ways that may or may not be applicable to Grand Isle's specific circumstances. She expected the library board to propose changes to those sections. Board Member Parizo expressed urgency, noting that the new library building would need a governing MOU in place before it opens. Morway confirmed she would place the draft in the attorney's hands for transmission to the library. No motion was required, as no formal approval was sought at this stage.

### **XIII. Old Business**

#### **a. MERP (Municipal Energy Resilience Program) Mini Grant Funds to Disperse**

Chair Morway provided background on the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) mini grant. She explained that approximately three years ago, the town applied for and received a \$4,000 mini grant, which had been a prerequisite for obtaining a free energy audit — valued at roughly \$20,000–\$30,000 per building — and ultimately for qualifying for the full MERP grant of \$500,000. The full MERP grant was nearly complete, with approximately \$7,000 remaining to be billed, expected to be closed out by November. The \$4,000 mini grant, which had remained on the town's books throughout, must be expended and closed out concurrently with the main grant, and is eligible to be used for grant administration.

Morway proposed splitting the \$4,000 evenly between Town Clerk/Treasurer Boutin and Karen Allen, who had served as the primary grant administrators. She credited both with shouldering substantial work that would ordinarily fall to a full-time treasurer. Melissa acknowledged that selectboard members — including Morway and Board Member Parizo — had also contributed significantly to grant administration. Board Member Parizo declined any portion of the funds, stating he had understood that work to be part of his role when he took it on.

Chair Morway noted that checks could be issued at any time following the meeting and would be signed off on at the next meeting.

Motion to split the MERP mini grant funds of \$4,000 evenly between Melissa Boutin and Karen Allen for grant administration services was made by Chair Morway and seconded by Board Member Parizo. The motion carried unanimously.

### **XIV. Executive Session**

Motion to enter into Executive Session citing State Statute 1 V.S.A. §313(F) — Confidential Attorney-Client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body — with Highway Foreman Steve More and Desiree More, and Sara Santor, in attendance, was made by Chair Morway and seconded by Board Member Parizo. The motion carried unanimously.

The board entered executive session and reconvened in open session at 8:10 PM.

Motion to exit executive session at 8:10 PM with no decision was made by Chair Morway and seconded by Board member Bushway. The motion carried unanimously.

### **XV. Administrative Check-In**

No administrative check-in items were discussed following the return from executive session.

### **XVI. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Cochran and seconded by Board Member Howrigan. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.