

Town of Wendell
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting: Selectboard Offices and by Zoom

Board Members Present: Chair Laurie DiDonato, Vice Chair Paul Doud, Member Adam Feltman

Also Present: Treasurer Carolyn Manley; Town Moderator Katie Nolan; Meagan Sylvia and Al Macintyre, Finance Committee; Miriam Warner and Phyllis Lawrence, Library; resident Donna Horn; Town Coordinator Kelly Tyler; Recording Secretary Cynthia Bolling; members of the public and press

I. Roll Call/Call to Order

With all members present, Laurie DiDonato called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Announcements

There were no announcements.

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IV. Selectboard Updates and Comments

There were no Selectboard updates or comments.

V. Approval of September 24, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Laurie made a motion to approve the Sept. 24, 2025, Selectboard meeting minutes. Paul Doud seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Topics to Discuss with Sen. Comerford. Laurie; Chair Meagan Sylvia and member Al Macintyre, Finance Committee (FinCom)

The following issues were proposed for discussion with Senator Joanne Comerford when she attends the Selectboard's October 22, 2025, meeting:

- Health care insurance
- Schools (special education)
- Status of initiative to update the PILOT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) program for state-owned property
- An intermunicipal FinCom initiative, which is aimed at sharing tips with other towns
- Some issues concerning Proposition 2 1/2

VII. Special Town Meeting, October 15, 2025. Laurie, Town Moderator Katie Nolan, Meagan, Al, Library Director Miriam Werner, Treasurer Carolyn Manley

A. Logistics

Town Clerk Anna Wetherby usually gets the hall set up for the Special Town Meeting (STM).

B. Warrant Articles

1. Library Painting

Discussion

- The Town doesn't have enough money to pay for both the rot repair that's needed as well as the exterior painting.
- The FinCom is willing to approve transferring \$10,000 from the rehab loan payback account to the Town Building Repairs account to pay for the rot repair now, assuming it's less than \$10,000, with painting to be done in the spring.
- Carolyn confirmed that Brian McHugh at the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority said the closed-out rehab funds are to be used for things like weatherization and to improve the quality of buildings, so this is an applicable use of those rehab funds.
- Miriam has found someone to do the rot repair. She expects to have a written estimate (under \$3,700) in a few days.

When she prepares the motions for the Oct. 15 STM warrant, Kelly will include a motion to amend Article 4 by substituting "building maintenance" for "painting" so that it's broad enough to include rot repair as well as exterior painting."

2. Planning Board Budget

Discussion

- When Shared Clerk Ashley Penna resigned, a Planning Board member took over the duties as clerk, but when that member also resigned, the Planning Board agreed to spend its entire \$400 budget to hire a clerk for the position, but only from Sept. 1 through Dec. 26, 2025.
- The FinCom recommends that this article be passed over, for these reasons:
 - a. Since the override didn't pass, salaries have already been affected. In view of that, it's unnecessary discretionary spending.
 - b. The tax assessors have asked for a clerk in the past and have been turned down.
 - c. The \$1,200 that the Town is being asked to transfer to the Planning Board's budget is a lot of money for just a couple of months.
- Laurie explained the \$1,200 number: She originally put in that amount to restore the Planning Board's \$400 budget, then added \$800 to pay for a clerk's services through the rest of the fiscal year.

Next Steps

- Everyone agreed that this article should be passed over, with the understanding that the FinCom will explain why when the motion comes up for discussion.

Kelly will add the board's decision to pass over Article 5 in the motions for the Oct. 15 STM.

C. Remote Participation at Town Meetings

In October, Laurie received a memo from the Massachusetts Office of Disability dated June 4, 2023, that gives guidance on how towns can comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which allows individuals with disabilities to participate in town meetings.

- According to the memo, the ADA "requires towns to make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures to allow people with disabilities to access town programs, activities, and services, including Town Meetings."

- a. It also says that one reasonable accommodation would be to allow an individual to attend town meetings remotely.

Discussion

- Laurie thought this might work if the disabled individual were to Zoom in from home while another person checked in for them and made sure the individual could speak or vote.
- Al agreed with Laurie such remote participation would require good audio, but Wendell's technology isn't there yet.
- Adam wondered if the Town would be obligated to provide the technology to make remote participation feasible.
 - a. The memo notes that a Municipal ADA Improvement Grant (which is administered by the Massachusetts Office on Disability) is available to fund the necessary technology.
 - b. It was noted that the grant application deadline has passed for FY 26.

Next Steps

- Laurie will ask Town Counsel for his opinion on the memo.
- Paul will ask Anna if this potential exception would be okay with her, if Town Counsel also approves it.
- Laurie will contact the disabled individual who first asked the board to explore how she could attend meetings and ask what she thinks a reasonable accommodation could be.
- Since remote participation at town meetings may now be possible but nothing has yet solidified, Laurie withdrew her suggestion that she mention at the STM the board's work on a fragrance-free policy.

VIII. **Appoint Ray DiDonato to the Municipal Light Board.** Laurie

- Ray resigned as the Municipal Light Plant manager and hired someone else to fill the position.
- Now he wants to serve on the MLB with Robert Heller and Laurie.
- He will fill out and submit a Conflict of Interest form.

Paul moved to appoint Ray DiDonato to the Municipal Light Board, effective Oct. 8, 2025, for a term ending on June 30, 2026. Adam seconded. Laurie abstained.

With Paul and Adam voting aye, the motion passed 2-0.

IX. **Items Unanticipated**

A. Town Common Banner Approval. Laurie, Miriam

The Meetinghouse wants to put up a banner on the Town Common to advertise an upcoming play.
Does the Selectboard need to approve this?

Discussion

- The Library would like to put up its Ghost Town at Sundown Banner two weeks before the Nov. 1 event.
- The banner for the Meetinghouse's event, which runs from about Oct. 16-24, would need to go up at about the same time.
- In light of the potential conflict, if there's no room to hang both at the same time, the Library's event would take precedence, since the Library is a Town entity.
- Miriam was okay with hanging both banners at once, if it's possible.
- The gazebo was suggested as an alternative place for the Meetinghouse to hang its banner if both won't fit.
- If the space can't be shared, the Meetinghouse will be asked to remove its banner by Oct. 24.

Kelly will follow up with Meetinghouse Board President Court Dorsey about the banner hanging.

B. Nuisance Dog Hearing. Laurie

The board will revisit the schedule for the hearing when it obtains more specifics from the sheriff's office.

C. Wendell Road. Paul

- In an ongoing effort to determine how to arrange for a meeting about the repair of a portion of Wendell Rd. (about six-tenths of a mile) that's shared by Wendell and New Salem, Paul put in a call today to the New Salem Town Coordinator.
- He'll follow up to get an agreement about the meeting's logistics.

D. Wendell Holiday Fair. Donna Horn

The board approved Donna's request to rent the Town Hall on Friday, Dec. 12 and Saturday, Dec. 13 for a holiday fair that she and Christine Texiera are running.

Kelly will put Donna in touch with Town Hall and Kitchen Coordinator Sarah Wilson and let Sarah know that the booking has been approved.

E. Art Space in the Town Office Building. Donna

Donna has been made the curator for an art space in the Town Office building and would like details about how she can proceed.

Discussion

- There's a board with a channel in it at the top where art can be hung, on the wall leading to the Selectboard's meeting room.
- Donna proposes to hang art seasonally, about four times a year.
- Kelly will send Donna the liability waiver she needs to complete before she start.

XII. Adjournment

**Laurie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. Adam seconded. No discussion.
The motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting Documents

2025-09-24 Draft Selectboard Meeting Minutes_V2

2025-10-08 Selectboard Agenda

Dog Hearing Decision Protocol

Ray DiDonato – MLP 25-10-08

Unanticipated Items 2025-10-08