

Town of Wendell
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
November 5, 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: Stephen Gross, Planning Board; Road Commissioner Phil Delorey; Treasurer Carolyn Manley; 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 7:01 p.m.

II. Announcements

There were no announcements.

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IV. Selectboard Updates and Comments

Laurie said a consulting tax assessor from the Regional Resource Group (RRG) might be able to meet with the Selectboard at its second December meeting to discuss how the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) negotiations are progressing.

V. Approval of October 22, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Laurie made a motion to approve the Oct. 8, 2025, minutes. Adam seconded.

Discussion

- At the Oct. 22 meeting, the incorrect date (Sept. 8, 2025) was used when the board made a motion to approve the Oct. 8 minutes.
- The Oct. 22, 2025, minutes were amended to replace “Sept. 8” with “Oct. 8” in the motion to approve the Oct. 8 minutes.

The minutes as amended above were approved unanimously.

VI. Fire Department’s Tanker Truck

Laurie made a motion to declare the Fire Department’s tanker truck (1988 Mack Model - RD600 Body Tank, VIN#1M2P179C8JW002767) to be surplus equipment. Adam seconded. No discussion.
The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Wendell Road.

A section of Wendell Road maintained by New Salem (six-tenths of a mile in length, which had never been marked on the state map) now officially belongs to Wendell.

Next Steps

- Set up a meeting with representatives from the New Salem Selectboard, Wendell's Selectboard, the Road Commission, and RRG consulting assessor Adam Hemingway (who has all the basics about where the new line goes). Questions to be addressed at the meeting include:
 - a. Should the Town line be changed to accommodate the property owners who have always considered themselves to be residents of either Wendell or New Salem and who are affected by the new line?
 - b. Would the changes to the line require a new survey?
 - c. The property owners have been paying taxes to both towns. How would any agreed-upon changes affect how much they pay to each town?
 - d. How would the changes affect services provided to these homeowners by the Fire Department and the Swift River School?

VIII. Dog Hearing Preparation

Laurie urged everyone to review the format and guidelines contained in the documents for the dog hearing, scheduled to be held during the board's Nov. 19 meeting.

IX. Solar Application. Laurie, Planning Board Chair Stephen Gross

The Planning Board has held a public hearing about the application solar power developer Nexamp has filed to build a facility on Lockes Village Rd. and asked if they could refer the question of the application's legality to Town Counsel Doneski.

Next Steps

- The board was in favor of referring the Nexamp application to Attorney Doneski.
- Stephen will set up a time to meet with Attorney Doneski.

X. Green Communities Annual Report. Laurie

Laurie asked the board to grant her the authority to sign off on the Green Communities annual report.

- Many years ago, Wendell fulfilled the criteria for being named a green community under the Green Communities Designation and Grant Program, which helps towns find clean energy solutions.
- In order to keep that designation, the Town must complete and submit an annual report, which Laurie does with help from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG).

Laurie made a motion that Laurie DiDonato has the authority to sign off on the Green Communities annual report for fiscal year 2025. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Old Farley Road. Laurie and Road Commissioner Phil Delorey

Last year, the board debated the question of the ownership and maintenance of Old Farley Road in executive sessions, but Counsel Doneski advised Laurie that a closed session wasn't necessary at this time.

Discussion

- Road Commissioner Phil Delorey agreed with Laurie's assessment of the current status of Old Farley Road:
 - a. Since it has been designated a Private Way, it's not appropriate to spend Town resources (like providing snow plowing services) on it.
 - b. Any further change would have to be decided at a Town meeting.
- According to Phil, while it would be a major expense to fix the old road (Stone Place Rd.) that was discontinued, it's the only one that could be repaired to bring it up to current standards.
- In Jan. 2025, the board sent a letter to the landowners via the Kupper trust but did not get a reply.

- The ownership of the road is still in question because there's no clear documentation that would answer either of the following questions: Did the Town discontinue the road (and thus is no longer its owner) or just discontinue its maintenance?

Next Steps

Laurie invited the board to try to develop contacts among the homeowners along Old Farley Road who might know how to get in touch with someone from the Kupper trust.

XI. Facilities Manager Report. Frank McGinn

Frank used the computer screen in the office to present spreadsheets showing his assessment of the roof and exterior of the Senior Center and the exterior damage to the Library, with links to pictures of areas in need of repair.

- Categories in the template for each building included such major areas as roofing, exterior, ventilation, plumbing, electric, basement, attic, and interior, with room for comments and action level (from low priority to high) about each item inspected.

A. Senior Center

An examination of the roofing and the exterior showed that the building has been painted recently as is generally in very good shape.

- The chimney needs repointing because a lot of the grout is missing. Action: high priority.
- There is mold buildup on the north side of the slate roof. Action: monitor.
- The flashing in one area may be galvanized. Action: Further inspection required.
- The north gutter is tilted down a bit. Action: low priority.
- See the underground leaders at the rear of the building and soffit fascia (wood). Action: further inspection required.

B. Library

Frank interrupted his examination of the Senior Center to help Library Director Miriam Warner with the ongoing repair of the rotting Hardie board at the Library. It's the only area of the building that he has been able to assess to date.

- The Hardie board is deteriorating above the entrance where the roof and wall meet. Action: high priority.

Discussion

- Frank is also starting to take pictures of all of the buildings and gather historical information about each.
 - a. The info will help determine when products, like a roof or boiler, are likely to fail.
 - b. Laurie observed that in addition to the Historical Commission, Town Engineer Jim Slavas should have a record of some of the data Frank is seeking, especially if it's mechanical.
- The person repairing the Library will probably rip out and fix the flashing where the roof runs off the portico.

Next Steps

- Frank will try to get a quote for the chimney repair.
 - a. The repair is complicated by the existence of the slate roof, which is slippery and is best handled by a specialist (ideally, a mason).
- The board expressed its appreciation for Frank's detailed report.
 - a. To help uncover issues that might pop up before Frank can get to the rest of the Town buildings, Laurie suggested that he consult with Phil, Finance Committee Chair Al Macintyre, and Fire Dept. Chief Matt O'Donnell about high-priority items they might currently be aware of.

XII. Wendell-Erving Bridge Repair. Phil Delorey, Road Commission

Once the deck was removed, rust was discovered on the metal undercarriage of the bridge, which caused the contractor and engineer to halt work.

- Phil sent the board a copy of the report the engineer filed describing the depth of the rust on the steel.
- That report has been sent to the contractor, who will give an estimate on the cost of the extra repairs.
- The contractor, engineer, and the Town of Erving have agreed not to proceed with the repair until a cost estimate comes in.
- The bridge probably will not reopen this winter.
- Wendell will have to decide how to find funding to pay for the extra repairs.
 - a. Originally, the Mass Rural Development Fund awarded \$125,000 to Wendell through the Community One Stop for Growth grant, but when the bid that came in was so much higher (because of rising prices), Erving opted to put up \$125,000 from its cash reserves and Wendell matched it with Chapter 90 money.
 - b. Phil is willing to reapply for the grant, but that money won't come in until next year. Or, it could use Chapter 90 money, but then it's gone.
- Part of the issue is deciding which repairs need to be done now and which could be postponed.
 - a. While the structure is not at risk of failing, some steel plates that were hidden underneath were seriously rusted and must be replaced now.

Phil will update the board after the new estimates come in.

XIII. Items Unanticipated

A. Grant Extension

Laurie signed a form granting an extension through June 30, 2026, for the FY 2022-2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation Program (a federal grant administered by FRCOG).

B. Appointment of Matt Demarco

Laurie made a motion to appoint Matt Demarco to the Board of Health for a term beginning Nov. 5, 2025, and ending with the next election. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. Agreement for Dog Shelter Services

The board signed an agreement for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office to continue to provide dog shelter and animal control services for FY 2026.

D. Repair of Parking Lot Light

Laurie made a note that the light in the back hasn't been fixed in three years because of electrical issues that go beyond just the bulb.

E. Town Hall Fee Policy

Laurie presented a new policy she put together that restructures the Town Hall rental fee amounts and more clearly describes when fees should be waived and for whom.

Policy Highlights:

- Established, recurring events given by Good Neighbors and the Full-Moon Coffeehouse will have a separate fee agreement.

- The fee waiver for memorials is retained.
- The fee waiver for Town boards and committees is rewritten to clarify who those entities might be.
 - a. Events sponsored or run by the Town are defined as events where “no admission/donation is collected that is going to an entity other than the Town, and a Town committee or department is at least partially funding the event.”
- The fees for public and private events are reset according to whether or not the renter is a Wendell resident.

Paul made a motion to approve the new Town Hall Fee Policy as written. Adam seconded. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Laurie will continue working on the separate policies for Good Neighbors and the Coffeehouse.

XIV. Adjournment

Laurie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m. Paul seconded. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Documents

2025-10-08 Selectboard Meeting Minutes_Aproved

2025-11-05 Selectboard Agenda V2

Unanticipated Items, 2025-11-05