

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, May 13th, 2025
DRAFT

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jessica Demeritt at 7:01pm.

ATTENDANCE

Members in attendance: Jessica Demeritt (Chair), Walter Crandall (Vice-Chair), Joe Szarejko, Sam Peisch, John Dunham

Members absent: None

Others in attendance: Stan Wilbur (Town Administrator), Tom Steadman, Marilyn Cargill, Jane Bennett Low, Lisa Burns, Stephen Pilcher, Debra Sprague, Jaime Schulte (Acting Recording Secretary), John McNerney

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There is a plan to have Monkton Day on August 17th. Cassandra Corcoran may join the meeting to discuss at some point.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA

No changes were made to the agenda.

REGULAR BUSINESS

APPROVE SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 22, 2025

W. Crandall moved to approve the minutes of April 22, 2025 as written. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

APRIL 29, 2025

J. Szarejko moved to approve the minutes of April 29, 2025 as written. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 4-0-1, and J. Dunham abstained as he was not present at the meeting.

MAY 7, 2025

S. Peisch moved to approve the minutes of May 7, 2025 as written. J. Dunham seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

REVIEW AND APPROVE CHECK WARRANTS

J. Szarejko moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #50428 in the amount of \$15,768.65. W. Crandall seconded. This is the dump truck note. The vote passed 5-0-0.

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J. Szarejko moved to approve Accounts Payable Payroll Warrant #50505 in the amount of \$23,928.34. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

J. Szarejko moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #50508 in the amount of \$8,878.63. W. Crandall seconded. Primary amounts were Pike, R&L Rubbish, storage container, truck repair, etc. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

REVIEW OVERWEIGHT PERMITS

The following new permits were reviewed and approved by W. Crandall:

CONANT TRUCKING
GREEN MTN SITEWORKS
HENRY EXCAVATING
MASTERTON & SON EXCAVATING
MIKE MORSE TRUCKING
MOUNTAINS EDGE EXCAVATION
SARGENT CONCRETE
TIM MORSE TRUCKING
VT WELL & PUMP
W R PRESTON
HENDEE EXCAVATING

FACILITY USE REQUESTS

There have been a number of requests, mostly straightforward uses of the room. Lewis Creek Association is asking for the Community Room in October for a day for their annual gathering.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Guests)

No public comment was offered.

NEW BUSINESS

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

J. Szarejko said tree cutting along powerlines is underway on Rotax Rd. There is another week of work on Old Stage Rd for ditching. The Tyler Bridge Rd culvert work is coming up next week (about a day of work). F550 is back following repairs. Cold patching and culvert clearing is on-going. Snowplow equipment has been removed from the trucks, servicing done. The new employee, Yogi, has been a great addition to the crew.

F550 LOAN

Discussion postponed to the next meeting.

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HIGHWAY CAPITAL FUND – POWER BROOM

The Road Foreman would like to buy a power broom. S. Pilcher said that the broom should be in the budget that was approved by the voters, so the Foreman should be able to go purchase one. The board agreed.

GRANT-IN-AID-PROGRAM (7:45 pm)

This municipal roads grant aid program is to promote water quality and prevent phosphorus from reaching Lake Champlain. The grant would be for \$18,500 and we need to match 20%.

W. Crandall moved to allow the Chair to sign a letter of intent to have the Town participate in the 2026 municipal roads grant-in-aid program. J. Dunham seconded. The vote passed 5.0.0.

CURB CUT PERMIT – COVERED BRIDGE ROAD

Ward Preston's property - trying to have another entrance to this 22-acre property. No culvert needed. More than 500' of visibility left and right. W. Preston would cut brush back to improve visibility and the road crew could assist since they will be doing some ditching in that location soon. J. Demeritt asked if this would be a second curb cut for the same property. Yes, it would be for a larger property.

W. Crandall moved to approve the curb cut permit of Ward Preston on Covered Bridge Road. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

VISION INSURANCE

There was a road crew member who was denied coverage for vision and the HRA card did not work, so the employee paid out of pocket. S. Peisch noted that the town currently does not provide vision coverage, but is looking at doing so. This would apply to full-time employees.

HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT ACCOUNT

S. Peisch noted that employees have been having issues using their HRA cards. S. Peisch has experience with this kind of issue in his day job and is willing to address it. He is being added as a contact for the Town with Blue Cross, so he can work on correcting issues, and expects to have an update very soon. S. Pilcher briefly described the history of health care accounts.

MOUNTAIN ROAD MAILBOX

A person on Mountain Rd. sent the town an invoice about four mailboxes damaged this past winter. J. Szarejko reached out to the person and didn't hear back. Some neighboring towns do fix mailboxes where there is some evidence that the plow wing damaged it, but not if it was caused only by thrown snow. J. McNerney noted that we have never paid for damaged mailboxes. In some cases

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the road crew has replaced a mailbox with a basic replacement where they know they caused damage, but are not required to do so. J. Demeritt and J. Dunham asked if there is a written policy. None is known to exist. S. Pilcher suggested there might be something in the town Right of Way policy.

LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

J. Demeritt invited S. Pilcher to provide updates and an overview of what the Plan is. S. Pilcher described that the plan is a list of names/resources in the event of an emergency, especially if we open an “emergency operations center”, which we have never needed to do. We have also not officially opened our emergency shelter in the past. Copies of the Plan go to the state, the fire dept., and town officials. The Emergency Management Director goes through some basic training to put together the plan. The plan includes how to reach organizations like the school or daycares as part of emergency response. Businesses are included who we might reach out to in an emergency for assistance. J. McNerney added that state reimbursement for certain emergency situations is increased by having a plan. The municipality has adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which S. Pilcher and J. Szarejko have been trained on. The Select Board is asked to adopt the Plan and S. Pilcher attested that we have adopted NIMS some time ago.

J. Dunham asked about emergency management locations and whether there is a generator able to power the town hall. J. Dunham suggested that it would be best if the town owned a generator on a trailer that could be moved to locations that need power in an emergency.

M. Cargill noted that when working on hazard mitigation in the Town Plan the Planning Commission noted that the fire station is set up for cold events (they have heat), but there is no air conditioning there. The same is true of the Monkton Central School. The only place we have A/C is at Town Hall.

W. Crandall moved to approve the 2025 local emergency management plan and municipal adoption form with the contingencies that the two childcare facilities omitted be added to the plan. J. Dunham seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

TOWN BUDGET PROCESS

S. Pilcher was invited to discuss the town budget process. Select Boards act in a legislative capacity establishing policies and ordinances, appointments, and budgets. For budgets they approve and monitor budgets through the year, which are approved by the voters.

The budget has many line items. The first two digits of the line item are which fund it is connected to. 01 is the General Fund. 06 is for revenues. 07 for

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expenses. The process to develop the budget involves asking the committees for budget requests toward the end of each year. The budget has color-coding by committee to assist the committees in updating their requests. Previous years are compared and committees asking for a substantial increase are asked to come in to discuss that.

The highway department and highway fund is stand alone, to some extent and is the largest portion of the budget. There is a line for property taxes in the highway budget, which shows the amount that would be needed in property taxes to offset total highway expenses. Article 5 reflects this as a question to the voters, so the highway budget is voted on separately. There are also non-tax revenues (such as state grants/funding).

We do the same with the General Fund, but that fund is much more complicated than the highway budget because it addresses a wide range of things. There is a total amount of expenses against the General Fund and a line indicating the amount of property taxes that would be needed to offset those expenses not otherwise covered by non-tax revenues.

The Russell Memorial Library has a separate line as well.

S. Pilcher reviewed how these numbers lead to the Articles that go before the voters on Town Meeting Day. The budget sheet is a tool to help create the next budget and includes a summary and totals. It projects an approximate municipal tax rate, although the exact rate will reflect the assessors completing their work after Town Meeting Day before tax bills go out.

There is a piece of the budget that the Select Board does. In the past S. Pilcher worked with the Town Clerk to estimate things like the amount of Judicial Fines (a non-tax revenue). The actual amounts will certainly vary from the estimate. The best estimates, projections, and approved committee requests form the budget and that goes before the budget. Later the Treasurer and Town Administrator will make sure expenses are coded against . J. Demeritt asked if there is a standard tool for municipalities to create budgets, perhaps from VLCT. S. Pilcher said that NEMRC produces a budget status report, but he doesn't know of a standard. J. McNerney said that each town has different line items and numbers, so a standard tool might not be effective.

The Select Board often asks committees to limit their increases or reduce them in a difficult budget year. J. Demeritt noted that there is some institutional knowledge needed to understand some line items, such as mowing which is spread across multiple line items. S. Pilcher said the Town Administrator can help with that. He highlighted Fund 9, which is the Act 60 reappraisal fund. L. Burns clarified that there is a per-parcel amount that the state contributes for

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reappraisals. Once you go through a re-appraisal that fund is reduced substantially. NEMRC provides software to municipalities for accounts payable, accounts receivable, land records, permit software, grand list module, tax module, appraisals. S. Pilcher noted that there are funds like Fund 9 that build up over time and then have large expenses in a certain year, such as for reappraisal. We don't use property taxes to pay for this. The Town Forest grants were like that or the building fund. You don't mix that into the general fund, because it is for a certain use.

S. Peisch asked if any cushion is built into the budget. S. Pilcher mentioned there is a fund in the budget called the Tax Stabilization Fund, which can have that effect. It was used up this past year to limit rate increase. In a year where you have a budget surplus you might put some into the fund.

S. Pilcher is willing to help the board in the future.

TAX ANTICIPATION NOTE

J. Demeritt described that the Treasurer was able to finalize a Tax Anticipation Note with the National Bank of Middlebury and provided a draft motion for the Select Board's consideration. S. Peisch asked if the Treasurer got additional quotes. J. Demeritt said that the Treasurer worked with two banks.

J. Dunham moved that the Town of Monkton accept the offer by the National Bank of Middlebury for a Tax Anticipation Note for the term May 15, 2025 until December 31, 2025 in the principal sum of SIX HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE THOUSAND AND NO/100 DOLLARS (\$629,000.00), with interest on the drawn principal equal to FOUR POINT ONE FIVE PERCENT (4.15%) FIXED per annum commencing when monies are withdrawn. Further, the Monkton Selectboard authorizes the Chair, Jessica L. Demeritt, to execute any and all loan documents to facilitate the Note, including signature by electronic mail, as approved by the Selectboard at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 13, 2025. W. Crandall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0-0.

SPECIAL FUNDS

J. Demeritt asked if T. Steadman would like to discuss Special Funds. He would not, at this time.

APPOINTMENTS

P. Low joined the board to address appointments for the Monkton Recreation Committee, which has a size of 7 members. He has been on the committee for

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20 years and nearly all committee members have long tenures. He would like to see new members who still have children playing on those fields and who are invested at that level in Monkton recreation. He proposes to become an alternate on the committee and be replaced by Devin Mason, or expand the size of the committee. The committee has been struggling, over the past four years, to reach quorum. D. Mason has been attending every meeting and has ideas and energy.

W. Crandall asked if D. Mason could be the alternate instead. Various committee structures were discussed. J. McNerney provided some history of alternates on town committees. P. Low would support a smaller committee size with more alternates for flexibility.

J. Schulte commented that a smaller committee of 5 with 2 alternates would be more flexible (such as ANAC). If members are not active on the committee it may not make sense for them to remain on the committee. J. McNerney noted that the Rec Committee members sometimes have a specific focus, so they can be valuable even with low attendance, perhaps unlike other committees.

There was further debate about whether the Rec Committee has clearly made a specific request to the Select Board.

J. Dunham clarified with P Low that the only request to the Select Board at present is to add one alternate, move Paul Low to the alternate position (at his own request), and appoint Devin Mason to the position currently occupied by Paul Low. That is correct.

S. Peisch moved to transition Paul Low to a new Alternate position on the Recreation Committee with term ending in March of 2026 and appoint Devin Mason to the position currently held by Paul Low expiring March 2026. W. Crandall seconded. The motion passed 5-0-0.

OLD BUSINESS

SELECTBOARD RULES OF PROCEDURES
No action taken.

VERMONT GAS SYSTEM
No action taken.

ANNOUNCEMENT SIGN

W. Crandall made contact with a person at Daktronics about an electronic sign for the town. He doesn't have pricing yet. He did learn that the one in Vergennes was installed in 2017. The one at CVU was installed in 2005 and is still working

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well. He does know that these are expensive (perhaps in the ballpark of \$25,000), but they do last a long time. He suggests that we work on the size that we want and other criteria so we can begin to plan for the expense. This is also similar to the sign at Mt. Abe, which is less capable.

OTHER BUSINESS

J. Demeritt received a request from Dianne Leary who has been volunteering at the Barnumtown Cemetery for some years to fix fallen gravestones. D. Leary is requesting one yard of stone dust to support those efforts. The town does not have a cemetery commission and currently only mows cemeteries.

W. Crandall moved to approve a yard of stone dust to be delivered to the Barnumtown Cemetery. J. Szarejko seconded. J. McNerney offered to deliver the stone dust to reduce cost. D. Leary has a means of moving the dust. J. Demeritt will connect J. McNerney with D. Leary. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

J. Dunham mentioned that the Select Board was invited by Barb Crandall to attend a Special Meeting of the MAUSD Board.

J. Demeritt mentioned that a Select Board member mentioned that the length of meetings is difficult and invited the board to propose options to shorten meetings. J. Szarejko thinks the board has worked through a lot recently and meetings will get shorter. S. Peisch suggested aiming for a 9:00pm finishing time and adding a timecheck at 8:45pm to identify if there are any items remaining in the agenda that must be completed. J. Dunham suggested bringing lengthy items to a close sooner.

J. Demeritt asked if there are topics that the Board would like to learn more about at future meetings. W. Crandall was encouraged by the meeting on the budget last week. It was well attended and dispelled some confusion. W. Crandall and J. Szarejko would like to invite the Treasurer to join Select Board meetings more regularly to increase the Board's understanding of the budget. J. Dunham would like to have a specific topic for each meeting if we invite the Treasurer monthly. It could be virtually as well and at the top of the agenda. This might also address a concern of the Treasurer's that he sometimes learns about action items from the meeting minutes.

S. Peisch noted that grants are a topic the Board should spend more time on. He thinks the town has done a good job of obtaining grants in the past, but there is an opportunity to increase the board's understanding and potentially minimize tax rates. W. Crandall mentioned that the Daktronics representative commented that financing is available for electronic signs.

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DETERMINE TIME/DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 27th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was needed.

ADJOURNMENT

**J. Dunham moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20pm. J. Szarejko seconded.
The vote passed, 5-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,
Jaime Schulte