

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 27th, 2025

Final

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Jessica Demeritt at 7:00pm.

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), Shane Lawrence (Road Foreman), Jaime Schulte (Acting Recording Secretary), Lisa Burns, Tom Steadman, Randy Charboneau, John McNerney, Debra Sprague, Cassandra Corcoran, John Zaikowski, Sue Stasny

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA

No changes were made.

REGULAR BUSINESS

APPROVE SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

MAY 13, 2025

W. Crandall moved to approve the minutes of May 13th, 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 #50515 in the amount of \$37,448.71. W. Crandall seconded. Amounts include Acker Waste Mgmt, Addison County Sheriff, Casella, Hart & Mead, Heffernan's, Pike, etc. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

J. Szarejko moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #50512 in the amount of \$12,787.28. S. Peisch seconded. Amounts include BCBS, Redline Construction, VT Utility Mgmt, etc. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

S. Peisch moved to approve Accounts Payable Payroll Warrant #50519 in the amount of \$16,124.53. J. Szarejko seconded. This is payroll for town employees. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

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J. Dunham moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #50523 in the amount of \$27,715.68. W. Crandall seconded. Amounts included utilities, bills for health insurance, sheriff's dept, equipment repair. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

REVIEW OVERWEIGHT PERMITS

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

BEVINS & SONS
JOE BISSONETTE
LEWIS EXCAVATING
ROSS ORVIS
S & J LANDWORKS

FACILITY USE REQUESTS

New requests are in the town calendar. Request for yoga classes, etc.

J. Demeritt noted that we may hear tonight from Cassandra Corcoran about facility use for the Monkton Day festival in August.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Guests)

T. Steadman said he sees that the preliminary Grand List has been lodged with the Town Clerk, but he would like to know how someone would know if their assessment has changed without coming to the Town Hall to review it.

L. Burns joined the board to discuss the Grand List process. Last year was an appraisal year and this year is a normal year. The new Grand List is a preliminary list because the state hasn't provided Monkton with the utility valuations (VT Gas, GMP, etc.). The state now determines those evaluations and provides them to municipalities. We are not yet able to include the valuation of those utility properties, but the residential and business valuations on the List are complete. There could be changes in valuation due to changes to properties, Use Value appraisal, etc., until tax bills go out. Notices were sent out to landowners today and will be arriving soon. Grievances can be raised on June 12th regarding valuations and that may result in some changes as part of the final Grand List. The town's process follows state requirements.

T. Steadman would like to see additional communication to residents beyond what the state requires.

J. Dunham brought up that some residents missed the timeframe to grieve their assessments last year. L. Burns said there is an opportunity to do this each year. The process is to provide evidence to the assessor that an error was made, such

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as with acreage, square footage, etc. Simply disagreeing with the assessment without clear evidence is not likely to result in a change in assessment.

J. Demeritt asked if June 12th is the only day to appeal. Yes, that is the window to grieve an assessment. From there it can be appealed to the Board of Civil Authority.

Cassandra Corcoran joined the meeting and came forward to discuss the Monkton Day festival on August 17th that she is working on with Deb Gaynor. The intent is to celebrate the town, its agricultural past and present and our history. The Fire Dept., Boy Scouts, some of the orchards and farms, the Historical Society, the Library, and more are involved. There will be food, events, etc. This project was started by the Monkton Community Coffee House. C. Corcoran is interested in whether the town's insurance will cover events around the town as well as residents transporting other people between them. She would like to use the Town Hall for the event, including the community room and areas outside. W. Crandall requested that a facility use request be filled out. S. Wilbur said the town's insurance would cover town committees. Vendors should have their own coverage. There is a way to get some one-day event coverage from our insurance. He will provide information to C. Corcoran.

NEW BUSINESS

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT AND FEMA UPDATE

S. Lawrence, Road Foreman, joined the board. The first round of roadside mowing has been completed. Old Stage Rd ditching has been completed which will allow us to get some related FEMA funds. Some grading and additional gravel has been in progress in spots around town. The Tyler Bridge Rd culvert work is starting this week and the southbound lane would be closed. Regarding Piney Woods Rd the recommendation came back and it is for three box culverts. These culverts would solve the problem, but would likely be too expensive (probably over \$1.5 million for the project, of which the town would need to pay a portion). The process with FEMA has been slow and iterative. Not efficient from the town's perspective.

The draft mailbox and over weight policies look good to S. Lawrence.

VT AOT JULY DISASTER GRANT AGREEMENTS

J. Dunham moved to authorize the Chair to sign State of Vermont grant agreement #ER0218 in the amount of \$5,224.55. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

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J. Dunham moved to authorize the Chair to sign State of Vermont grant agreement #ER0219 in the amount of \$21,334.35. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation is covering 100% of the cost for both of these July 2024 road repair projects.

OVER WEIGHT ORDINANCE

This was noted as an in-progress item. It needs a few numbers added for specific limits, etc.

MAIL BOX POLICY

S. Peisch has created an updated draft of the mailbox policy. J. Demeritt also had reached out to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns which recommended the Town create a Winter Maintenance Policy, which could include the topic of mailboxes. J. Demeritt also found that many towns have a mailbox policy. She suggested that the next step would be for the town attorney to review the policy, as recommended by VLCT. J. McNerney was invited to comment about how the past Select Board included the attorney in their process. They were cost conscious, but it depended on how comfortable the Board was proceeding without the advice of the Town Attorney.

J. Dunham commented that it probably makes more sense to include the draft mailbox policy under the Town Right of Way policy, since damage could occur in any season. There was general agreement on this point.

J. Dunham moved to enact the proposed Right of Way policy changes subject to approval by the Town Attorney. J. Szarekjo seconded. Discussion followed about the sequence of events. The vote passed 5-0-0.

BC/BS AUTO PAY

There was a notice received by some town employees from BC/BS about their insurance coverage potentially being terminated. The issue was relating to a late payment, which has since been resolved. S. Peisch suggests that the Select Board approve autopay of invoices to prevent this insurance concern from occurring in the future. The Treasurer has advised that autopay may not interface well with the NEMRC system, but it may be possible. J. Demeritt would not want our employees to have this experience again, but thinks it may be a one-time concern due to the delayed timing of receiving funds from the tax anticipation note, causing a delay in payment to BC/BS. There was discussion of automating certain town payments and the pros/cons of doing so. W. Crandall suggested approving payments a month in advance.

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J. Demeritt asked the board how they would like to proceed. S. Peisch would like to explore how to establish automation. BC/BS may be under more fiscal pressure, so is following up faster on a late payment than perhaps in the past.

There was discussion of why the notices went to the beneficiaries rather than to the plan administrator (the Town). Some notices are required to beneficiaries.

T. Steadman asked why the bill was paid late by the Treasurer and thinks there should have been more communication and planning.

S. Peisch took an action item to work with the Treasurer and BC/BS to understand the options for automation.

VISION INSURANCE

S. Peisch has been looking into vision insurance and advocates that it be provided. The total cost to the town to provide this for the road crew would be approximately \$323.52 annually.

J. Demeritt moved to approve an IMED Option 6 vision insurance policy for the road crew in the amount of \$323.52. S. Peisch seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT ACCOUNT

The ability of the road crew to use their HRA cards has been intermittent. S. Peisch has just been added to the town account and should now be able to better investigate the issue. He is also working on gathering what the cards can and can't be used for.

TAX ANTICIPATION NOTE DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

The Tax Anticipation Note was obtained from the National Bank of Middlebury (NBM) and was deposited into a checking account with the NBM, rather than being deposited into the town's account, to save on interest.

S. Peisch moved that the Town of Monkton open a deposit account with the National Bank of Middlebury (NBM) in conjunction with the Tax Anticipation Note issued by NBM on May 15, 2025. Further, the Monkton Selectboard authorizes the Treasurer, William C. Joos, and the Chair, Jessica L. Demeritt, as signers on the deposit account, as approved by the Selectboard at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 27, 2025. J. Dunham seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

BOBOLINK PROJECT

S. Stasny joined the Board to discuss The Bobolink Project, which compensates landowners for NOT mowing during certain summer months to maintain nesting

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habitat for bobolinks. The Conservation Commission applied to participate in the Bobolink Project to inspire Monktonites to participate in the Project through this example. The Conservation Commission would put a sign in Morse Park to communicate that it is part of the Bobolink Project and to raise awareness. Since the town does not receive revenue from mowing Morse Park the proposed contract is for \$0. The requirements of the Project align already with the timing of mowing already in place through the Morse Park Management Plan.

J. Zaikowski, Chair of the Recreation Committee, would like this to be reviewed by the Rec Committee before any action is taken. The Morse Park Management Plan expects collaboration between interested parties and the Recreation Committee has final approval on management decisions for Morse Park.

J. Demeritt thinks the idea of raising awareness for the larger community on bobolinks is good. The Board was amenable to giving the Recreation Committee time to discuss it at their meeting on Monday. This was also acceptable to S. Stasny.

The Select Board will put this item on their agenda for the next meeting. J. Zaikowski asked that a member of the MCC join the Rec Committee to discuss this next Monday. S. Stasny is available.

J. Schulte questioned whether this is actually a management decision related to the park, because nothing is changing. The decision was made already on how to manage mowing in the park, but it is certainly good to have collaboration among all of the parties and follow the process. J. Dunham asked if pulling invasive plants in the summer months counts as “harvesting”, which would not be allowed under the contract. No, it would not.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A member of the Lincoln Select Board emailed the Monkton Select Board to see if anyone is working on civic engagement with our residents. The Board was not clear if there was a requested action. No action to be taken at this time.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

J. Demeritt asked the Board how they would like to proceed, as progress has been slow on this item. S. Peisch is interested in moving forward with the Rules of Procedure. It supports communication with the public on how the Board operates and supports the direction the Board is taking to establish procedures. He appreciates the work J. Demeritt has put into the detailed draft. J. Szarejko also appreciates clear operating procedures and suggested that each Board member send their comments on the draft to S. Wilbur to assemble. There was discussion and that will be the approach.

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ANNOUNCEMENT SIGN

No update at this time.

CEMETERY COMMISSIONER

The Select Board can appoint a person to become the Cemetery Administrator or other title. S. Pilcher has been handling issues related to cemeteries and would like to move on from that capacity. He recommends creating a new position and offering a stipend. The Board is interested in working with S. Pilcher to create a role description. L. Burns is potentially interested in the role and would like to understand the scope. J. Demeritt will follow up with S. Pilcher. The approach would be to advertise the position per town policy.

APPOINTMENTS

The Town Forest Committee has recommended that Cassandra Corcoran be appointed to the Committee for the 4-year term beginning 3/2025.

W. Crandall moved to appoint Cassandra Corcoran to a 4-year term on the Town Forest Committee. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 4-0-0.

J. Dunham said that the Monkton Energy Committee has a request. The committee has only 2 remaining members, J. Dunham and David Bristol, but is defined to have a size of 5 members. At this time they are unable to function without a quorum. The committee would like to reduce their committee size to 3 members with 2 alternates, allowing the committee to function with a quorum of only 2.

S. Peisch moved to transition two vacant regular member positions on the Energy Committee to alternate positions. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

OLD BUSINESS

VERMONT GAS SYSTEM

J. Demeritt spoke with Cindy Hill, who is the Town Attorney for New Haven. Monkton has expressed interest in being part of the Vermont Gas case and is an intervenor. C. Hill and J. Demeritt discussed that Vermont Gas Systems allegedly did not compact the soil correctly around roads. Municipalities are responsible for roads and their safety, so towns can ask Vt. Gas to pay for inspections and any remediation of road crossings. There are a series of dates in the case from June through November and things are beginning to move quickly. Monkton could join with New Haven and C. Hill, bolstering the overall case. As long as we agree with

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the approach she is taking, Monkton could avoid the cost of working with our own attorney.

J. Demeritt suggested having C. Hill join our next Select Board meeting. S. Peisch thinks it can be challenging to understand what our leverage is as the town, so having her join our meeting would be helpful. The Board was agreeable.

W. Crandall asked if it would be helpful to get questions from the public. J. Demeritt thinks the scope at this time is on the specific safety issues. The road crossings topic is very concrete and specific for the Town and should be our immediate focus.

OTHER BUSINESS

J. Demeritt invited S. Peisch to comment on the town website. S. Peisch has been working with Ian Schulze, webmaster, and considering how to update and modernize the site. It is helpful for the webmaster to have clear direction from the Select Board. It could be an agenda item on an upcoming meeting to get feedback from the community on the website.

J. Demeritt discussed the idea of an Action Item Roundup, or similar, at the end of meetings to make sure there is a clear list. The Board agreed and offered items from this meeting:

ACTION ITEM ROUNDUP

- 1) S. Wilbur will look into 1-day event insurance and send the info to C. Corcoran.
- 2) S. Wilbur will send the Right of Way policy to Jim Carroll, Town Attorney.
- 3) S. Peisch will work with the Treasurer and BC/BS on options for payment automation.
- 4) S. Peisch will update the road crew on the decision made tonight regarding vision insurance.
- 5) S. Peisch will update the road crew on progress with the HRA cards.
- 6) S. Peisch will update the list of town appointments.
- 7) S. Peisch will work on website ideas and discuss with I. Schulze.
- 8) S. Wilbur will send out the Rules of Procedure policy to the members.
- 9) All members will review the Select Board Rules of Procedure and send their feedback to S. Wilbur.
- 10) J. Demeritt will ask S. Pilcher to write up a job description for the cemetery administrator role.
- 11) J. Demeritt will ask C. Hill to join the next Select Board meeting.
- 12) S. Wilbur will follow up with Rick Rockwell regarding mowing (see below).

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J. Dunham has received a couple of concerns about the quality of the lawncare at the Town Hall. Two specific concerns - cutting too shallow and excess cuttings on the lawn. J. Szarejko has also heard concerns to the effect that mowing is not frequent enough. W. Crandall noted that the weather has not been cooperating. J. Demeritt asked S. Wilbur to reach out to Rick Rockwell (added to the Action Item Roundup above).

DETERMINE TIME/DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 10th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

PERSONNEL REVIEW

J. Demeritt moved to find that premature public knowledge about a person employed by the town would place both the person and the town at a substantial disadvantage. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.

J. Demeritt moved to enter Executive Session to discuss a person employed by the town under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(B) of the Vermont statutes and invite Stan Wilbur to join the Board. J. Dunham seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0. Entered Executive Session at 9:05pm.

The public left the meeting and J. Schulte stepped out of the room.

J. Demeritt moved to exit the Executive Session. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0. Exited Executive Session at 10:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT

W. Crandall moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:01pm. S. Peisch seconded. The vote passed, 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Jaime Schulte