TOWN OF CRAFTSBURY
SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025
7PM | CRAFTSBURY TOWN HALL

Present Alison Blaney, Bruce Urie (Jim Jones on vacation) | TOWN CLERK Michelle Warren | Paul Fixer (EDITOR, HARDWICK GAZETTE); Steve Perkins (HIGHWAY & FD); Laura Spence (Sterling College Dean of Academics); Scott Thomas (PRESIDENT, STERLING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES);

Meeting Agenda

Jim called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

- **Action — Adjustments / Changes to Agenda**

  Add: read/review web page notice and announcement regarding litigation
- **Action — Approve Select Board Regular Meeting Minutes of November 3rd.**

  Bruce motioned to approve the meeting minutes; Jim All ayed. Motion passed.
- **Action – Approve Plowing CT Stoneworks (same price as 2025, plus additional separate bid for Tanner Road)**

  No need to put out last year's plowing; no finalized purchasing policy. Can squeeze together: will go over; not a continuation (can continue without putting out to bid). Doing Tanner Road means there are two separate contracts. **Alison motioned to approve to renew the three-year contact - $4500 per year – starting in December; Bruce seconded. All ayed. Motion passed.**
- **Action — Approve Unifirst Contract**

  Alison motioned to approve the contract; Bruce seconded. All ayed. Motion passed.
- **Discussion — Approval of Purchase Policy**

  Policy read and reviewed: describes purchasing agents, minor and major purchases. Sole-source vendors; multi-bid requirements. Fire Chief should be excluded; has own budget and money. Only Town Clerk, Road Foreman and Select Board (add: about new hires probationary period - any new hires in a purchasing agent position should have a one-year probationary period that includes working in tandem with an existing PA). Protects Town and the new hires (avoid making costly mistake; allows them to receive the required new-hire onboarding training and support). Will update with revisions and submit to Town attorney for review. Dollar amounts ok; show trust.
- **Action — Schedule Meeting to Review Town Plan Recommendations**

  First week in December: Wednesday, December 3rd at 10 am; Regular meeting on the 2nd at 7 pm.
- **Discussion — Town Personnel Policy Changes**

  Nothing to review at moment.
- **Discussion – Sterling College**

  Dr. Scott Thomas and Dean Laura Spence explained that the College is not closing; it is closing its Bachelor's degree program at the end of the Spring 2026 Semester. The college board and staff are committed to supporting students as much as possible through the transition and helping to graduate as many as possible in August. It's no secret that Sterling College has been struggling for

many years, probably since 1958. The college has always been a nimble, thrifty place. How to separate Sterling and Craftsbury on economic, social and other connections; disruption is of consequence to everybody in Craftsbury. Not just Craftsbury and Sterling residents who are working at College or attending classes there. Most recent manifestation: efforts to raise enrollment, operating margins always most difficult to meet. Bring in grants, large dollars - shift resources to ensure success, but operating costs always an issue. COVID happened, dwindling enrollments. Shrinking class sizes. Lots of deferred maintenance on campus. August class enrollment numbers not met; education regulations require specific numbers of students for curriculum (highly regulated). Researched options: expand learning, week-long courses. Ran out of time. Face choice: collapse in middle of semester or determine how best to move forward. This requires significant sacrifice: going from 27 to 17 employees starting January 1, 2026. Three-step elimination: eliminate as much expense as possible; 2) determine suitable fixed costs for summer (budget) 3) review budget with personnel in mind. Want to create a slimmer budget; slimmer staff. Most staff will be moving from full-time to part-time to teach curriculum. Committed to graduating as many students as possible. Working with creditor in Boston; will allow College to award degrees in August. Possible transfer partnership with other colleges include favorable admissions, transfer terms for students including the match of financial aids, take all or most of credits. Flexibility and lots of support; overwhelmed by amount of support from other institutions; some very focused on helping and those have led to partnerships. Board of Trustees has made announcement well in advance so students can have time to think about options and make transition as smooth as possible. In discussions with institutions throughout the country: from Arizona and Oregon to the East. Want to protect the students and obtain the best for them. Have tried to cover all anticipated contingencies. What's next for Sterling College? It is in the Trustees' hands; they will steward the college. It is not in a free-fall. Trustees will determine next steps; will assess assets, etc. It will be a Sterling-led endeavor overseen by capable board. Longer transition periods allow time to make sustainable. Now is the opportunity for the college and community, collectively, to find a way forward. Select Board members thanked them for updating the Board on the situation. College will issue periodic reports to avoid any miscommunication: it has already happened with reports that Sterling is closing: It is not closing; it is changing its academic programming.

- **Action – Approve Placement of Notice for Website for Litigation Regarding Gravel Pit**

  Notice of federal lawsuit regarding operation of gravel pit on Gateway Drive. Emphasize key points. Alison read the notice: it mentioned Town operations are always in compliance with environmental standards; a moot lawsuit that is part of ongoing litigation. Will post to website with a copy of complaint. **Alison motion to add the notice to the website with the copy of the complaint to advise Town of litigation; Bruce seconded. All ayed. Motion passed.**

- **Discussion – Special Recognition for Steve Marckres for Publication in Local Media**

  Alison read the special recognition notice to be placed in local newspapers; it thanks Mr. Marckres for his many years of dedicated service, upkeep and care.

- **Committees**
  - Recreation Committee – seeking replacement for one position
- **Clerk Report**
  - Taxes Update - ~$1M
- **Road Foreman Report**

Plowing during recent storm resulted in broken wing tower; broken plow part. Similar issue last winter. Request repair of other to ensure there is a spare available. Obtaining bid / quotes. Can still plow. Will provide repair costs for both.
MRGP - Municipal Roads General Permit (for municipal road drainage) - due by January. Bruce will contract with engineer for planning; must be done by January 15th so want to get the process started.

- **Upcoming Projects to Keep on Agenda**
  - Replacement needed for 3 positions on Conservation Commission
  - Phone System Replacement
  - Cell Tower Regulation
  - Contractor Letters
  - Unclaimed Parcels
  - Triggers for Opening the Emergency Shelter, Providing Assistance, Activating N2N
  - VT Route 14 - Slow Down Sign Request - Karen Lapoint
- **Other Business & Walk-ins That Have Business to Come Before the Select Board**

  Editor of Hardwick: Mr. Fixer asked about the Town's paper of record (Town uses the Chronicle); also considering offering the Gazette for sale in the Genny.
- **Public Comment**

  None.
- **Decide Next Meeting Date & Adjourn**

  Meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm. Next meeting will be Tuesday, December 2, at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Hudson
Select Board Clerk