Town of Brookline, NH
Selectboard
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brooklinenh.gov



Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 18, 2025, 6:15pm
In-Person Meeting (Town Hall Meeting Room) and via Zoom

In attendance: Eddie Arnold, Brian Rater, Ed Perry, Jerry Roche, Stephen Dolfini, Paul Branscombe, Chief Hebert, Chief Stewart, Patti Howard-Barnett, Jesse Bassett, & Lisa Scalia

6:15: Non-public Session minutes set #1
Minutes taken by Eddie.

Eddie makes a motion to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) personnel, at 6:15 pm, seconded by Ed.
Roll call vote: 5 yes

Eddie makes a motion, seconded by Ed, to come out of nonpublic at 6:42pm and seal the minutes. Roll call vote: 5 yes

6:30: Selectboard Meeting

Pledge of Allegiance

Read "Ground Rules for Hybrid Meetings"

Approve Public Minutes: 8/04/25

Brian makes a motion to approve the minutes of 8/04/25, seconded by Ed. Vote: 5 yes

Approve Non-public Minutes: 8/04/25 #1-8

Ed makes a motion to approve the non-public minutes of 8/04/25* #1-8, *seconded by Jerry. Vote: 5 yes

Approve Non-public Minutes: revised 7/21/25 #10

Brian makes a motion to approve the non-public minutes of 8/04/25* #1-8, *seconded by Ed. Vote: 5 yes

Approve Warrants

Accounts Payable Warrant #33 $74,553.61
Payroll Warrant #34 $89,724.53
Police Detail Warrant $1,125
Ed makes a motion to approve the warrants, seconded by Brian. Vote: 5 yes

Public Input & Announcements

- Lynn Giblin, Mountain Road: is heading an initiative to place wreaths on all veteran's graves in Brookline. Approximately 300 @ $17 each. Brookline Community Church is having a take-home meal on 9/5 and proceeds will go towards the wreaths. Information will be on the Town website soon.

- Chief Stewart: reviews Selectboard videos. On August 4, he accidentally swore in glee and surprise. Apologies.
- Chief Stewart: congratulations to the winners of Best of Merrimack Valley/Souhegan Valley, Brookline Ambulance Service won best of Ambulance Service and Jason Kramarczyk won best EMT.
- Eddie: Richard Gribble was runner-up for best Firefighter in the same.
- Chief Hebert: Officer Julian Dufresne won best Police officer.
- Chief Stewart: The Ambulance Service now offers child rider, car seat checks and training.
- Eddie: we note with regret that Paul Branscombe, Town Administrator is retiring on October 31.
- Brian: passing of Sid Hall Jr. long-time resident and author; he edited "Nestled Here" the update to our town history and was the son of Betty Hall. He will be greatly missed.

Voting Machines: Patti Howard-Barnett, Town Clerk and Jesse Basset (Deputy Moderator), Peter Webb,(moderator on zoom), Lynn Giblin (SoC), Brenden Denehy (former SB).
New voting machines must be in service by March 2026 for the election.
Voting Works (VW) is an open-source system, which takes full images of both sides of the ballot. It emphasizes ease of use and modern design but is slower to read ballots and may require more machines. Cons are that it doesn't support colored ballots and some maintenance issues have been reported (hard to keep clean). It is a newer system with less proven long-term support.
Image Cast (IC) is manufactured by Dominion, the same as our current AccuVote machines. Pros to this system are that it has a proven track record, is widely used across NH, takes full images of both ballot sides, supports tabulation as you go, and accepts colored ballots. Cons are that it is harder to service and less modern.
Jesse: Attended demos of both systems twice and spoke with moderators. Voting Works is modern and works well. Image Cast is more reliable and offers better long-term support. Patti spoke with 3 towns using Image Cast and all are very satisfied. She prefers Image Cast for tabulation ease and reliability.
Based on demonstrations, research, peer feedback, and input from election officials: approve Image Cast as our new voting system to replace AccuVote.
Ed makes a motion to purchase 2 Image Cast 2 Voting Machines by Dominion for $14,000 (and we will apply for $7,000 from State reimbursement), with a do not exceed $12,000 clause, seconded by Brian. Vote: 5 yes

Annex Repair RFP Opening
We received 2 proposals for repairs to the Annex.
One from Paxor Construction in Merrimack, NH for $32,250 with detailed specifications. Second is from IFCC in Medford, MA: $35,707 for labor, material, and equipment. We will check references and make a decision about how to proceed and if we can find space in the budget for this year or have to push it to 2026. *We will decide at 9/2 meeting.*

Town Administrator Search Update
We regret to accept the resignation of Paul Branscombe, Town Administrator, effective October 31, 2025. We have received 5 applications so far. We hope the

new person will start mid-October to train with Paul. We will set up preliminary interviews, then involve Department Heads in second interviews.

Financial Reports

Sharon prepared 2 financial reports for the Board:

1. YTD: Budget vs Actual Expenditures: we are in the black. Slightly above were: insurance, communications, streets, health agencies, recreation (a lot of this is paid for the year).
2. YTD: Revenue for 2025 year over year to 2024: we have received $26,000 in Federal reimbursement for Fire Dept solar panels. Revenues from taxes/registrations are up. 2,000% increase in revenue from State, due to reimbursement for Bond Street Bridge. *We need a hearing to accept this (add to hearing for J-54).*

Municipal Finance Software

Paul emailed MRI to get more information on their software.

He had a reply today: "We've done a handful of conversions from Quick Books (QB). Sometimes a challenge, sometimes not depending on how QB is being used. Hancock was an early conversion from QB. That may be who you are thinking of. I've copied Scott Smith, who is new to our staff (former Finance Director for Somersworth/Wolfeboro and a few other places) - he would be involved in the conversion process as we typically need to do some accounting/finance investigatory work to see how to approach the conversion. I will be in touch." – Christian Pearsall @ MRI

Brendan: Christian talked to Tad, Sharon, and him last year. He said it can take awhile and they only do so many at a time. He said QB is a valid software for a town of our size.

Plodzik said re: 2024 audit that QB is fine for us.

Ed: thinks there was something in the audit that we should be moving on to from QB. He asks if we are afraid of change and clinging to old software. We can't get a Finance Director without modern information to give them. He thinks they were pressed to say, "you can get by on QB but should move on."

Eddie: since he's been on Board, it has been noted in several audits, that we are looking at data several times to get information, which creates opportunities for error. While we have one General Account, QB is ok. If/when we move to multiple accounts, we need other software.

Brian: what is their backlog right now? Paul: ask them. Can we implement in 2026?

Digitizing Building Dept Documents

Laura Allen suggested this. She has prepared an informational document, included in this week's packet. Refer to her report, summarized by Eddie. Considerations: time, cost, staff requirements.

Potential to add scans to website and make them searchable. Cost for scanning by a company is estimated around $30,000-40,000. She researched large format scanners and we would need one 36" wide, which costs $3,000-19,000. Scanning wands do not come large enough. She suggests using a digital camera to take photos, suggests a $700 package and USB drives to store the information. The camera is cheaper. She also wants a larger screen or multiple screens. The equipment could be under $2K. Data storage with a company is monthly (by size of data stored and how often it's retrieved). We need to decide if we want the files publicly accessible or just for staff.

Brian: notes it is a 2 phase process, with everything first saved, named, and stored, then in the second phase, create a database of the documents to make them searchable.
Paul: we will ask Laura Allen to come to the Sept 2 meeting.

Grove Discussion

The NH Marine Patrol (part of the State Police) visited the Grove in response to complaints, mainly from out-of-state boaters, about the proximity of swimmers and children to the boat launch area.
The Marine Patrol ordered that swim lines must be: at least 20 feet away from the state-owned boat launch area (starting at the fence line) and no more than 50 feet from the shoreline. Yvonne has applied for a swim line permit and moved the swim lines to comply. The usable swimming area is now significantly reduced. There is a clear conflict between swimmer safety and boater access.
Ed noted that the Marine Patrol is favoring boaters over local swimmers. He raised the idea of: verifying the exact property lines to see if the fence can be moved. Considering local control over parking. The state only controls 7 parking spots at the boat launch. Restricting remaining parking to residents only during the summer season may discourage overuse by non-resident boaters. Possibly using buoys or barriers to physically separate swimmers from boat traffic for increased safety.
Brian inquired about the Recreation and Conservation Committees' stance on resident-only parking. Ed reported that both committees were amenable to exploring that option. Eddie suggested making across-the-street parking resident-only during the summer season. Steve visited the site and measured the swim line placement: it has been moved 43 feet from the fence, exceeding the 20-foot requirement. That area is currently being used by boaters and some residents to launch boats, which further reduces safe swim space.
Ask Recreation Committee why the line is 43 feet instead of 20 feet.
Verify property boundaries to determine if adjustments can be made and explore restricting parking.

Town Policy on Immigration Enforcement

Brian talked to Gina Bergskaug, Superintendent of SAU 41. If there's an incident on a bus or at a school, they call our Police Department (BPD).
Chief Hebert talked to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Manchester. They have never done anything on school or bus and would only do so in a life or death situation.
Brian: this policy has been changed considerably. It is to notify the residents of what we know about any actions. Do we want a policy for this?
Eddie: feels this is a political hot topic and we should not create a divisive policy. He is ok with the purpose and the town alerting residents of confirmed actions but doesn't think we need a policy vs. a position statement.
Steve: wouldn't we update residents on any important action in town anyways?
Eddie: it creates a political statement by only addressing immigration enforcement vs. any other important actions.
Brendan: appreciates time the Selectboard and Department Heads, etc. have spent on this. He did not intend to create something so labor intensive. The key word is "expectations." We've always had the expectation that we follow the law. But the reality is that at the Federal level, there are people who are no longer following the law. He wants

to clarify our expectations, so residents know we will follow the law. If Chief Hebert gets notified of an action, he wants them to be sure it follows the law. For instance, the need for a warrant to remove someone. If an emergency comes up, and the Feds need BPD to come assist, then we need to know that when the police arrive, they will follow the law and uphold the rights of all residents. The police must insist on a warrant, for example, because that is the law. You can't just grab people into a UHaul and take them away. He is confident the BPD will follow the law but wants a policy for townspeople to know that it is so.
Eddie: doesn't think we need a policy but thinks we could issue a position statement about this. Maybe we could work with Chief Hebert on this. To say all laws will be followed.
Steve: doesn't think the BPD can deny assistance to a Federal action.
Chief Hebert: he doesn't think ICE needs warrants all the time; BPD doesn't.
Jerry: doesn't think we should create a policy on this. He has faith in the Chief and BPD.
Steve: this singles out this one type of event and he doesn't think we need a policy on this.
Ed: this is the only area that has changed so significantly in the past year. He never thought this would happen. The government is doing things it never did before and he thinks we do need a policy on this.
Eddie: but having a policy won't change how things happen. He thinks it's a bare minimum policy and agrees we can't really control it.
Steve: it's a reporting policy. Like we would for a traffic accident, etc. He doesn't think this is a valid way to protest the current situation.
Brian: never wanted to and still doesn't want to make a statement. The issue is that we are seeing concerning changes happening. For example, school shootings are more common. No one does anything to address the issues and they keep getting worse. Here is one situation a lot of people are concerned about and want reassurance, so he said to himself, what can we do about this? We started with something with a proper process for a policy and many items ran into exceptions for emergency situations, etc. So now we have a commitment to residents to notify them what's going on as best we can with the limited powers we have. He thinks we don't have the votes to pass even this basic policy. He is withdrawing it after significant discussion on this. He is opposed to making a non-binding statement, rather than a policy that would require action to change or undo.

Update on Sale of J-54

Chris Drescher will hold the closing at Town Hall by September 8. Sharon and Patti are still working on calculating what is owed to the Town. Lisa sent an email and chart to everyone who has spent work time on this, to submit their charges for reimbursement. After closing, Chris Drescher will file with NH Interpleader, who contacts and pays the former owners; however, the Interpleader does not perform the calculations.
Once closing date is finalized, we will schedule the hearing to accept the funds, which will likely be Sept 16.

Energy Proposals

Brian: Kearsarge has a huge solar field and they are required to make agreements with municipalities to offset the energy they produce. The agreement doesn't change our provider or consumption, but we get a portion of proceeds from their solar generation. There are 2 groups in our region- the other one has reached their limit. The agreement is printed for the Board. We need everyone to review it and get Legal Counsel advice. This

agreement is for 20 years, so we need to research it carefully. Town Counsel may not be familiar with this sort of arrangement, so we should speak to people who are.
Does it affect how we buy from NRPC? Jerry will check.
Brian will research further for Sept 2.

Compensation Policy Implementation

The Selectboard needs to schedule meetings with Department Heads, for cases in which there is an employee potentially at the wrong grade or step. Brian has received a few requests. *Schedule meeting times*.

Review/Edit/Sign Policies:

Political Signs: There should have been an amendment to add the Department of Public Works (DPW) area to the list of places. We used to allow it at the entrance, but now with the new building, it could appear to be on town property. Add a bullet for DPW with "** political signs are allowed on the hill between the entrance and the lower driveway to the trailers and resident's sand pit." Brian: add a bullet that it is prohibited at cemeteries also. People often put them at Cross Rd and Pepperell Rd and Cross St and S. Main Street triangles. The triangles are ok, but not the cemetery proper. Within fence and 15 feet outside the cemetery fence. Not all of Pine Grove is fenced in. **allowed at the points of 130/S Main and Cross Rd/130.
Include the RSA? No
Make edits and print a clean copy for Sept 2

Winter Weather: this was reviewed by Scott Leard, who suggested a couple of corrections on page 3. Brian: remove section on adoption and amendments.
Edit as suggested and print a clean copy for Sept 2.

Personnel: Policy has been updated with a hierarchical outline format. We are reviewing from ADA to Sick Leave tonight.
Find when this was created and add to front page OR say, "previously accepted."
Add page numbers to TOC.
Add next level to TOC, ie 1.2.3 to see how much it adds to the length. Save both ways.
From existing Policy:
1.6: ADA: add "the" to Town aware of the disability
Page 10 #5 change and to as
We need the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) definitions. *Chief Stewart will check these* and send to me. Page 11.
Same applies to 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 as to why emergency services are full time at 40 + hours? Does this apply to all emergency services?
2.1.4: take out building custodial.
3.2: to your supervisor
3.3: ok to leave this as is for Ambulance- do we want to change Fire to be the same? If Payroll becomes automated, we can change this later.
3.4.3 change Town Administrator to Financial Services.
3.6.2: Compensatory (comp) time can expire- do we want to change this? Any carried over comp time not used in the following year expires at the end of that year.
Brian: as long as comp time is capped at 40 hours, he thinks it's ok to carry over.
Eddie: looked it up and we can give comp time in lieu of overtime. It is not required to offer comp time.

Ask Department Heads if they mind not offering comp time? If Staff is ok, pay out the over time to make it cleaner. Leave it as is for now.
Page 16- we added a retirement investment plan. But on page 12, we allow for the deductions to a retirement plan, so this is already referenced. But it is a benefit to contribute to this. Add the NH Deferred Compensation Plan 357B plan to benefits at top of p.16 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.
Do we want to add Juneteenth to our holidays? It is a Federal Holiday but not recognized by NH. Not yet.
Brendan thinks Police Schedule has 11 holidays including Columbus Day and everyone else has 10 plus a floater(used at any time).
Under table, before *, add that "during the hiring process, the Selectboard reserves the right to negotiate a higher vacation allotment."
4.3: "employee's years of service" Add "only as a full- or part-time employee."
Paragraph 3: Policy is that you can't carryover vacation time year to year. Brian thinks this is inflexible. He would like to allow 40 hours to carry over to the following year.
Eddie: likes this change, but we want to be sure employees do take time off to get a break. If you allow carry over, we need to adjust the budget for this.
We need to consider the Personnel Policy when negotiating the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) next time. Anything we do here will likely carry over to CBA.
Eddie wants to hear from Department Heads about vacation rollover allowances.
4.4: it says "taken" not accrued. Change it to you earn 2 days on Jan 1 and use them any time or lose them. "two personal days per year allocated on January 1" for people hired mid-year, new hires before June 1 get 2 personal days and after June 1 get one personal day after 90 days of employment. Look for appropriate wording.
Do we want to change to paid time off (PTO)? Not yet.
Chief Stewart says you can offer one lump of PTO and pay out unused time at 50% at end of year with no carry-over.
Eddie suggests we leave it as is and next year consider a PTO Policy.
Why do part time people not get sick time pro-rated by their hours? Check into this?
Should we change it to a system where part-time employees get the equivalent of 2 weeks of sick time based on their weekly hours?
What is the definition of part-time? If it's regularly scheduled, we can get into per diem being part-time.
Revisit these 10 pages on September 2 and Lisa's document with additional suggestions.
What is the budget impact of part-time people having sick time? Sharon.

Old/New Business:

Propane RFP: Find the document and ask our regular vendors. Set up a request for proposal (RFP) for others to bid. Tanks are owned by Ciardelli. Set this up and find out price per gallon.

Town Hall Copper Ice Belt: this was recommended by Old Timer's Roofing to possibly save money on frequent repairs. A copper ice belt on a slate roof is a type of flashing designed to prevent ice dams and snow buildup from damaging the roof and potentially causing leaks. It involves installing a copper apron or pan system along the eaves, often with a double layer of felt and increased head lap, to manage snow and ice melt. This system helps to protect the roof from water damage during winter months. We do not have a cost estimate yet.

Get an estimate from Old Timer's for this copper ice belt.

Class 6 Roads: Abutters put a gate across the road with chain and no trespassing signs. The town owns it but does not maintain it. It is a public right of way. Abutters can gate it as long as it's not locked. There is a padlock, but it is not locked. They are within the law. Not sure about having "no trespassing" signs. People can drive through it. We could put up a sign saying it's a public way. Ed remembers that we wanted the Building Official to remove the no trespassing sign and the gate, as there were concerns that the gate itself was illegal, which we have since determined is not the case. That did not happen. Ed thinks the signs should be removed. He says they voted on it, and he is upset that this didn't happen.
Brian sent an email on this topic to the Selectboard to let them know. The only questionable thing is the no trespassing signs. Ed still thinks this is a gray area. Why have an unlocked padlock there that makes it harder to access and delays emergency services?
Eddie: the gate is ok, but the no trespassing signs should be removed. First step is to contact the abutters to remove them.
Brian will write a letter to the abutters to remove the signs.

Brookline Woods Building Permits: Dave contacted the Developer and told them they will need to file for new permits (with waived fees) if they do not pour footings by September 30.

Transfer Station Paving: Scott Leard says that needed base work will be done prior to paving. Most of the base is solid, but a lack of pavement depth has caused potholes and cracks. It should be 3" deep but is only 1" deep. Eddie: where the old still good area was used to flood- can it be raised a bit? *Eddie will email Scott.*
Brendan Denehy, Mason Road: asks that the Board not fund this paving. He thinks it's a good project, but using leftover asbestos money is the wrong thing to do. A few years ago, we found out about the asbestos issue. We had no estimate, so guessed at $100K. The Board decided to do it within the budget, carried it for a second year at Town Meeting and it was for asbestos remediation, not to be spent on anything else. Had it been a warrant article, this would not be allowed. It's like other things that we budget higher in case of unforeseen circumstances, but overages cannot be spent on anything else. When he was on the Selectboard, the asbestos remediation money was not intended to be spent on anything else but was to be returned to tax payers. This paving was not in the capital improvements plan (CIP) either. Shouldn't we cover something urgent if we have extra funds? This should either go to the unassigned balance fund to reduce taxes or for an urgent CIP project. Eddie agrees the Board said it would only be used for asbestos. If we decide to fund this, we should ask for public input. If we don't fund it now, we might be able to negotiate the same price for 2026 or we can budget for it. Ed: can we think about this till next time?
Find out if we can lock in the price for 2026 and decide at September 2 meeting.

Awards Night on September 24 at Murphy's Tap Room. Chief Stewart would like to spend $1800 for 2 tables from the Ambulance Expendable Trust Fund. There's $40,000 in it. It was established in 1998 and gives the Chief the ability to expend with no restrictions. This is where Ambulance donations go. We get a discount as members of the Chamber of Commerce, which is $1600 for 2 tables.

Jerry makes a motion to spend up to $1800 from Ambulance Expendable Trust Fund, seconded by Steve. Vote: 5 yes

Cybersecurity Training: statement from Selectboard that everyone with a town email needs to do this. Tell Department Heads that employees should do this on company time. Do it all together on a training night. *Paul: draft a letter to Department Heads on this*.

Budgeting Schedule: It's time to start guidance for budget season. We'll tell Department Heads the COLA percent and gas rates for preliminary budget numbers.
Decide on September 2 and budget letters go out September 3. Estimating 3.5% COLA preliminarily.
Remind Department Heads that they need their draft budget ready for the beginning of October.

Board & Committee Updates:

Capital Improvements Committee: will meet August 25.
Energy: People have expressed interest in joining. We may want to amend Charter.
Nashua Regional Planning Commission: Executive Committee next week.
Planning Board: meets August 21.
Melendy Pond Planning Committee (MPPC): meets Weds.

Review Mail Folder

Wildlife Trapping Co.- no interest

Review Planning Board Folder

Housing for Older Persons on Main Street

Review Items for September 2 Selectboard Agenda

- Annex Repairs Decision
- Estimate for Town Hall Roof Belt
- Budget Season Prep (Include Finance Committee on this): how do we want to present this information?
- Town Administrator Search
- Digitizing Documents at Town Hall: Laura Allen
- Municipal Accounting Software
- Closing for Lot J-54, Amount Due, and Hearing on Unanticipated Revenue
- Food Pantry Manager
- Transfer Station Paving
- Policies to Review: Personnel pages 10-19

Town Administrator Applicant Review: 6:30 Monday August 25. Selectboard only. Post a non-public meeting notice for this.

Eddie makes a motion to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (c) reputation, (l) legal, and potentially others at 10:00 pm, seconded by Brian. Roll call vote: 5 yes

Eddie makes a motion, seconded by Jerry, to come out of nonpublic at 10:44 and seal the minutes. Roll call vote: 5 yes

Ed makes a motion to adjourn at 10:45, seconded by Jerry. Vote: 5 yes

Minutes submitted by Lisa Scalia Date Approved: _____

X	X
Eddie Arnold Selectboard Chair	Brian Rater Selectboard Vice Chair
X	X
Ed Perry Selectboard Member	Jerry Roche Selectboard Member
X	
Stephen Dolfini Selectboard Member	