

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

August 25, 2025

Present: Pat Harvey, Chad Richardson, and Mike Teetsel

Guests Present: Kristen LaPell, Julie Smith, Terry Severy, John Champion, Rob Gardner, Bruce Jones, Jannah Murr Swedick, Alvina Rising Harvey, Ben Falk Brett Thrailkill, Mary Fratini, Vic Ribaud, Tara Murray, Deb Moore, Steven Hoffman, Amanda Garland

Guests Present on Zoom: Orca, Martha Slater, Troy LaPell, Lori Church, Dan McKinley

Pat called the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Pat confirmed the open meeting law conformity.

Prior Meeting Minutes: Pat moved to approve August 11, 2025, SB meeting minutes. Mike seconded. All in favor. So, approved. Pat moved to approve August 11, Special SB minutes with a correction to the date. Mike seconded. All in favor. So, approved

Pat received a request from Lori Church to include and amend the minutes of the July 22 Informational Meeting to include a transcript of that meeting. Pat moved to amend the minutes of the meeting with a sentence to include at the bottom of those minutes "If you would like to view or hear a transcript of this meeting, you can see it on Orcamedia.com." Mike seconded the motion. All in favor. So, approved.

Highway Updates: John said the roadside mowing began today. He made a request to the board to send a letter to the landowner with the new driveway on Quarry Hill to move his gate back so it won't get hit with the plow in the wintertime. John shared it is too close to the road and in the town's right of way.

Utilities Updates: Terry shared a sewer pump went and has a different wiring schematic, so he has called in someone to wire it up.

Grant Updates: Kristen said she is currently working on completing the Grant in Aid for West Hill and the Class 2 Structures Grant for Bethel Mountain paving.

VHI Management Update: Vic shared a couple of things. He said there was a productive meeting last Friday with office staff, Mike and Town's attorney, to go over processes for bill paying and authorization. The town attorney drafted an updated management agreement, and it is under review to finalize with the board soon. He said he also met with the architect, construction manager, Sarah Wraight from Two Rivers for a current update on the cost estimate for Phase 1 Capital Project is now 4.8 million. He shared that the construction manager believes the bidding would be better in the spring when bids typically go out. The project is still on schedule for completion in the fall of 2026. This can allow for both inside and outside construction to take place simultaneously. Vic said conversations are continuing with Community College of Vermont about creating and locating an early childhood development course and practicum tied in with the childhood center at the high school. Workforce has become a big issue nationwide. Pat asked how we stand with occupancy and leases. Vic said the first tenant is Rochester

Stockbridge Unified School District using the theater side of the building using the art room, music room and theater.

Selectboard Updates: Pat had a conversation with Sheriff Palmer about the concerns placed about the deputy's role overseeing the community and going beyond giving out speeding tickets. Sheriff Palmer passed along an email to update all his deputies that her concerns have been addressed, and the deputy's will be addressed all concerns while on patrol. Pat thanked Walter Wells for his concerns and improving safety for crosswalks. Pat said she connected the library with someone to help with shoving snow this coming winter. Pat said she responded to Deb Moore about the selectboard continuing to receive letters about the proposed cell tower. She read her response. She said the letters are in the file. She said when the company decided to move forward with the application, which hasn't taken place yet, all data will be collected and reviewed and the selectboard will draw their own letter to the PUC board but not before. She hopes this helps with clarity moving forward. Deb asked about the petition, if she could continue to submit them. Pat said they are informational only so they can be.

Update by Planning Commission: Dan McKinley spoke on behalf of the planning commission giving an update of where they are with the cell tower project. He shared the commission has done a very thorough review of the town plan and sent the PUC (Public Utilities Commission), Vertex and a couple Vermont agencies some comments about the concerns of the commission and of several areas of the town plan. This is all during the Advanced Notice although the application has not yet been filed by Vertex Verizon officially to the PUC. Dan shared Vertex Verizon could file that application anytime. Once the PUC has that formal application filed and completed there will be 30 days to provide the official comments to the PUC. After sending the letter, the commission will review all the public comments they have received to make sure they are all addressed in the review. Dan said they will draft a letter after addressing the comments, if there is a filed application. He said they will then draft a letter for feedback and then revise, and the planning will vote on whether to submit that or not.

Authorize to execute a "Notice of Federal Interest" for the Rochester High School Building to be recorded: Pat made a motion to execute a "Notice of Federal Interest relating to the U.S Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Service Community Facilities Grant # 53-014-38160352 for the renovating of the former Rochester High School building in the amount of \$2,329,000.00, and to cause said notice to be duly recorded in the Town of Rochester Land Records" Mike seconded. All in favor. So, approved. Pat also made a motion to execute a "Notice of Federal Interest" relating to Northern Borders Regional Commission grant number GT-255PC-005, for the renovation of the former Rochester High school building in the amount of 1,000,000.00, and to cause said Notice to be duly recorded in the Town of Rochester Land Records. Mike seconded. All in favor. So, approved

VT River Conservancy-Discussion on mowing/easement form ballfield to former high school walking path-Amanda Garland: Amanda introduced herself on behalf of Vermont River Conservancy. She said the conservancy puts conservation easements on land. She said these are places where people access rivers for various water activity. She explained the conservancy also protects flood plains for flood resilience and wildlife. She said the town has one of these protected areas between the school and ballfields. The Thraillkills' opened this to the town to protect and saw the benefits of flood resilience as well. Bill's passion was to give the

community access to the path. This can be accessed from the ballfields. Working with Brett, they have extended the benefits by moving the trail. The easement requires a 50' from the top of the bank of the river inward and landward. The trail was moved and has become a little bit harder to manage. She is asking the board to extend the town mowing to include the trail. Pat said they would take it under advisement and add the additional mowing in the budgeting process that will begin this fall. Pat thanked Bill for opening up his land to allow for the trail walking path.

Approve the July Treasurers Report: Pat moved to approve the Treasurers Report for July. Chad seconded. All in favor.

Town Treasurer asking SB to invoke Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Planning as a sole Source vendor for the Repurposing High School Project: This item has been tabled as the form is not ready just yet.

Discussion about catering on town property-Asia Kennett- This item has been tabled.

Household Hazardous Waste Day: This is scheduled for Saturday, September 6th from 9-1pm held at the town office. Pat will reach out for a constable to attend. She said it will be posted all around town.

Review and selection of Fuel Provider: Pat said since the town took on the high school building and has several other buildings in town, she has reached out to 3 fuel providers to submit a price for heating fuel as a locked in rate. She heard back from Dead River (2.86/gallon), Champlain Valley Fuels (2.65/gallon) and CV Oil (2.65/gallon). The board decided to go with C.V. Oil who came in as one of the lowest costs. She said their service is exceptional. She said the town office uses 635 gallons and estimated 20,000-30,000 gallons for the high school building and 708 gallons for the library. She said all of the buildings will be locked in at \$2.64/gallon. The library had already prepaid for their fuel and with this lock in it saved them another .30/gallon. Pat said it saved an estimated \$7-9,000 in fuel costs.

Public Comment: Rob Gardner asked if the town has an interest in setting up the radar signs and if we wanted him to look into how to have them repaired. Pat said we don't have the capability to monitor them or get the data off of them. She said the concern brought about in the past meeting was the intersection by the Skip Mart and Bethel Mountain and the park crossing and stop signs. She said it's a much bigger problem to get that addressed. She said there is a grant program that funds the sidewalk project 100% and will be installed next year with flashing crosswalk signs.

Rob also asked if the management agreement between VHI and the town could be shared prior to signing. Mike explained as the point person on that project, that it is their intention to make that document transparent.

Chad announced the Cucumber Umbrella that showed up on the park today, was addressed with a town policy stating to remove until brought forward through proper channels of filing out a Park Use Permit.

Many comments were discussed about the proposed cell tower pertaining to the town plan.

Alvina Harvey asked if Green Mountain Power has instructions for the car charging station. The board explained there are instructions now at the stations to help folks to use the chargers.

Meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm

Executive Session: Board went into executive session at 7:00 pm. Executive session ended at 7:30pm. No decisions were made.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Smith