

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

September 8, 2025

Present: Pat Harvey, Chad Richardson, and Mike Teetsel (absent)

Guests Present: Kristen LaPell, Julie Smith, Nancy Woolley, John Champion, Terry Severy, Vic Ribauda, Asia Kennett, Sarah Martire, Jannah Murray Swedick, Tara Murray, Deb Moore, Deb Scherrer, Don and Jean Murray, Andrew Fersch

Guests Present on Zoom: Orca, Martha Slater, Erick Koch, Michala Richardson,

Pat called the meeting at 5:00 p.m. and confirmed compliance with the Open Meeting Law.

Prior Meeting Minutes: Minutes of the August 25, 2025, meeting, were approved with minor clerical corrections.

Highway Updates: John reported the roadside mowing is complete, and Bethel Mountain Road paving has been finished. A new culvert project will begin tomorrow.

Utilities Updates: Terry reported that the company assisting with the installation of the new pump for Site #4 had an emergency in another larger town and Rochester is next on their list.

Pat added that the new building permits for any work within the village will require review by the Utilities operator before approval.

Repurposing High School Committee Updates: Vic reported the management agreement is nearly ready for approval. He emphasized the importance of proper insurance coverage:

- The building liability policy is covered by the Town.
- VHI, as management company, has its own coverage
- Contractors and tenants must provide certificates of insurance.

Vic also updated the board on tenant plans:

- 2025-2026: RSUD will occupy the building and pay rent (agreement discussed later in the meeting)
- 2026-2027: Anticipated tenants including RSUD (renewal), Hometown Physical Therapy, Penn Program (Andrew Fersch), a childcare provider (two organizations contacted), and three small office rentals.

Construction is scheduled for bid in the spring of 2026 with completion expected in fall 2026.

Pat noted that the high school auditorium would be an excellent venue for the upcoming multi-town discussion hosted by Two Rivers in late October or early November.

Selectboard Updates:

- A public inquiry was addressed by Vic.
- Two Rivers is organizing multi-town conversations to support the regional plan and local planning efforts; Rochester is being considered as a host. (late October/early November).
- No formal application has been filed for the proposed cell tower; it remains in the “intent to file” stage.
- Chad reported and unauthorized cucumber stand set up in the park without a Park Use Application. The stand was removed and later retrieved from the Town Office after discussion with the Town Clerk. Unauthorized park use is now under control.

New Business:**Chair to sign Local Development (LDD) Contract for Northern Borders Grant**

Administration Services Agreement with Two Rivers: Pat signed the contract with Two Rivers to administer this \$1,000,000 grant. Two Rivers’ fee will not exceed \$20,000, which will be paid out of the grant.

Chair to sign contract for USDA Community Facilities grant administration services with Town Rivers: Pat signed a two-year contract with Two Rivers for administration services at a fee of \$31,978.00. Kristen expressed appreciation for the expertise and support provided by Two Rivers planners.

Chair to sign Agreement for added funds to USDA Haynes Property project: Pat explained this erosion-controlled project, originally approved after the July 2023 storm. Rising costs have added an additional \$40,000 in grant funding. She emphasized the homeowners would not be able to bear any of the costs. The board tabled this item for further review.

Discussion about catering on town property-Asia Kennett: Asia asked about policies for serving alcohol at events on town property. Chad noted the ordinance currently prohibits alcohol. Any change would require a new policy with specific limits. Pat suggested reviewing how other towns handle this and said she was willing to research further. Asia explained the inquiry relates to a possible Homecoming dance at the HUB, where a licensed bartender would only serve beer and wine.

Town Treasurer asking SB to invoke Town Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning as sole source vendor for the HS project: This agenda item has been tabled, pending further review.

Approve Driveway Permit-Brian Shebario: Application reviewed by the Road Foreman, with a requirement to dig the ditch line 15’ above and below the culvert. Motion to approve by Pat, seconded by Chad. Approved unanimously.

Approval of License Agreement with RSUD for use of the former Rochester High School building: Pat explained this agreement is directly between the Town and RSUD, with VHI managing the operations. She recommended a five-day public posting before officially signing on Friday. Vic emphasized the importance of completing the agreement before children begin using the Auditorium side classrooms. The document will be posted at the Post office and Town Building Bulletin Board as well as in the Town Office.

Approve office and town garage new phone system: Julie reported Spectrum proposed a new phone system at least 20% cheaper than current costs. Pat requested a comparison with EC Fiber before making EC Fiber before making a decision.

Old Business:

Approval of selling food in the cookshack-Andrew Fersch: Andrew requested selling food out of the cookshack. Board approved with him revisiting each year for approval similar to the Farmer's Market.

Public Comment-limited to 3 minutes:

- Asia Kennett read to the board a note of thanks to community boards and volunteers.
- Tara Murray expressed her concerns regarding the cell tower and consistency with the Town Plan.
- Erica Falk requested a town survey or vote to gauge town opinion on the proposed cell tower.
- Deb Scherrier raised additional concerns about the proposed cell tower location.
- Deb Moore asked how to get on the next Selectboard's agenda. Pat directed her to contact the Town Office.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Smith