Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 28, 2026

These Minutes are considered a DRAFT until accepted into the public record (with any corrections noted) at a future meeting of the Whitingham Selectboard.

The Whitingham Selectboard held a meeting at 6:30pm in the dining hall of the Whitingham Municipal Center on Wednesday, October 28, 2026.

Selectboard members present: Scott M. Reed, Chair; Craig Hammer, Vice Chair; Rick Gramlin, Dennis Pike, and Lyman (Skip) Tefft.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Administrator; Gordon Bristol, owners representative; Matthew Wheaton, DEW Construction; Diane Abate, Stevens & Associates; and at least 31 members of the public.

Call to Order. Pledge of Allegiance. Additions or Changes to Agenda
Scott M. Reed called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)
None

Informational meeting regarding the bond vote
Question about the $1.3M in contingencies. When a project like this is done, we don't go all the way with the drawings before a positive bond vote, and because the drawings are only 50% complete, we must leave an allowance for final completion. Escalation was also included because of the way the economy is right now, by the time the project is in construction the cost is unknown.

Resident: the school is probably the worst piece of $&!+ he has ever seen, disappointed that we have the same contractor on this project. Response: along towards the end of the school project there were some problems, they were corrected. In a small town it becomes a life of its own. Matthew Wheaton of DEW responded about their company history with construction projects, how many each year and stated that they wouldn't be in business if they were so terrible. Mr. Reed said any building project is going to have its issues. Mr. Bristol noted his services are committed up to the bond vote and the Selectboard can determine if they want to continue with him after that. It was noted that DEW was not responsible for the design of the school.

Questions about the bond interest rate, explained that these are estimates that we received from the bond bank.

Question: how much is available in the highway garage fund? Gig answered that she believes about $300,000 but can confirm tomorrow. (Per the Town Report for the year ended June 30, 2025, the balance at 06/30/25 was $498,523.00. Per the Town Treasurer, the balance at 10/29/26 is $463,898.96 with $50,000 to be added this fiscal year per Article 25 passed during the March 2026 town meeting).

Question: can we use local volunteers to work on the project. Insurance is an issue and we would need a coordinator. The board is concerned about liability. We will use local vendors whenever possible.

Question about cost of local owner's representative/project manager. Mr. Bristol noted that about $30,000 could do it, if we use a larger firm, it would be $75,000 or more.

How long is construction? The plan is to clean out and tear down the old garage in March and to have the trucks parked in the new garage by November 1st.

The steel will be US steel or Canadian.

Concern: this is a bad time to spend this kind of money, what is the plan if the bond vote doesn't pass. It will never be cheaper in the future.

Do we anticipate cost savings from the new building? An actual dollar amount we do not know; it will be well insulated with LED lights.

S&A will prepare final plans that we have contracted for already. The price is not included in the DEW price.

Mr. Wheaton explained the bidding process they go through for each aspect of construction (plumping, electrical, etc.) to make sure we will get the best contractor at the best price. The Selectboard wants to use local contractors whenever possible.

One bay is large enough for a 10-wheeler, one resident questioned why we wouldn't be prepared for larger equipment in the future. Mr. Pike noted that a lot of the roads that he plows there is no way that a 10-wheeler could be turned around. We could put 5 10-wheelers in the garage, but we would lose one or two of the back bays

Complaint about the property not being large enough to expand in the future, what are we going to do 30 years in the future? This property is the best option that we have come up with in the approximately 5 years we have been working on this project. No one wants a town garage next to their property, nor do they want farm fields taken over for it.

Some think everything is at top dollar right now, it might be a lower cost in the future. When the costs go up as indicated is possible and noted on the concept estimate, it will be reviewed and decided by the Selectboard.

Is the highway department going to do any of this work? No, they are not contractors, we don't have paving equipment. The road crew does a good job; they are busy working. Would it be advisable to buy new equipment? There are no towns in Vermont that do their own paving.

Why wasn't this on the state ballot? The state ballot had to be prepared by July 1st and we didn't get the dollar amount for the bond until July 25th.

Mr. Weber noted that when he was a board member the first price estimate for the garage was $6.2M. He gave kudos that the board has been able to bring it down about $2M.

Question about the tax cost – a spreadsheet had been shared.

Another complement on how well the roads are maintained and how hard the highway crew works.

Big discussion over radiant heat, pros and cons. It is not in the plan right now.

Any consideration to heat pumps? It will be in the office. A resident said her 900 square foot house cost $700 per month to heat with heat pumps alone. They do not work well in the Wilmington Fire House.

Solar panels? We don't have enough space, we don't want them on the roof.

When the garage is demolished, where will the town crew work? Outside, they will park trucks at salt shed, equipment in storage containers, maybe use the fire house.

Discussion about the windows on the north side.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Scott M. Reed, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

Scott M. Reed adjourned the meeting at 7:33pm.

Respectfully submitted,

~Gig Zboray