



**Town of Whitingham  
Office of the Selectboard**

**MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2025 SPECIAL MEETING**

*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 special meeting at 6:30pm in the office of Jacksonville Electric at 351 VT Route 112 on Wednesday, December 17, 2025.

Selectboard members present: James Weber, Vice Chair, Rick Gramlin, Craig Hammer, and Skip Tefft.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Administrator; Stanley Janovsky, Jr., Road Commissioner; Rachel Littlehale, Town Clerk; Howard Dix, Assessor's Clerk; Sara Martin, resident.

Attending remotely: Justin LaSelva, resident; Chip Dana and Jon Saccoccio of Stevens & Associates; Robert Fisher, town attorney.

**Call to Order. Pledge of Allegiance.**

James Weber called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and led the pledge of allegiance.

**Additions or Changes to the Agenda**

None

**Hearing of Visitors for concerns not on the agenda**

None

**Highway Garage**

**Review 90% plans for new highway garage with engineer**

Mr. Dana and Mr. Saccoccio went over the plans. This 90% version shows a sprinkler system and a 2-hour rated fire barrier wall so that both options can be priced separately. Other aspects of the plan were discussed. **A motion was made by James Weber to approve the 90% plan to go out for cost estimate, seconded by Skip Tefft, all in favor.** The cost estimate should be back by January 9<sup>th</sup>, according to state statute the Warning for Town Meeting must be posted between January 22 and February 1<sup>st</sup>, so we have a little time to work with the bond bank, but Gig will confirm this is enough time for them.

**Review and discuss two contract amendments for highway garage**

Stevens and Associates has provided two contract amendments for the highway garage project. The first is for an additional \$14,050 for public engagement. After discussion it was decided that if we need additional help, we can get it but there is no need to sign this contract amendment.

The second is for \$24,100 for sprinkler system design which became necessary after the Department of Fire Safety's initial review of the plans. After discussion, it was decided to put this on the back burner, while we wait for the cost of installing a sprinkler system.

**Budget: deeper review of 26/27 budget**

Sara Martin questioned the Selectboard decision to provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 4%. Mr. Hammer responded that the decision was made for this year, but in the future, they will look at it harder. Mr. Weber noted that it is a cost-of-living adjustment for pay based on what the inflation rate is doing. In 2021 and 2022 there were large increases in the COLA that the Selectboard did not adjust to, so over the past 3 years they have been trying to make that up. It's not a raise in any shape or form. Mr. Gramlin noted that even after the 4% we are still behind that curve.

Ms. Martin feels that if the town is going to pay people more it should be because they've done something exceptional or they've gone above and beyond. She noted she is pleased with the highway crew and their plowing efforts. She has a problem with the Selectboard Administrator's salary in an unelected position, thinking that it is a lot of money and a lot of power. (The only power the Administrator holds is what the Selectboard allows.) Mr. Weber noted that the Administrator brought in over \$3,000,000 in grants to the town. But Ms. Martin thinks we need to be looking at somewhat of a younger generation, "we need to get some young kids in here who have the brain", also mentioning technology skills and use of AI. "To keep the Howards and Gigs and all of us old people going, we kind of need to step aside in some aisles and say you guys are running faster than us."

Ms. Martin also questioned spending \$60,000 a year on the library but only \$40,000 on the fire department. Noting that the head librarian earns more than the Assessor's Clerk. Mr. Hammer noted that the library trustees submit a budget and it is an Article on the Warning for Town Meeting to be voted on the floor. Same as the Fire Department.

Ms. Martin went on to talk about the town website and NEMRC's website, the proposed highway garage structure, and where AI is going to be in five years. She mentioned partnering with the school. Gig had replied that she had a conversation with Christy Betit who runs a program at the school, about having a student come into the office to work a few days a week or a few mornings a week to start learning about town work to see if it is something they are interested in for their careers. Gig did not include it in the Administrator's budget this year. Meeting attendees noted that the students would be interns and not need to be paid.

Mr. LaSelva noted that he appreciates the hard-earned experience of those who've been serving the town for years and supports the cost-of-living adjustment to bring overall payroll closer to parity with neighboring towns. Hard working staff is our biggest asset, simply replacing them with younger versions, who we can pay less, is not the best way to ensure town government continues to operate smoothly, and AI is no substitute for knowing the nuts and bolts of how things work.

### **Approve January newsletter for mailing**

The board approved the newsletter contingent on Gig checking with Mr. Boyd about some wording related to Town Meeting. Mr. Janovsky asked that “mailboxes must be 3 feet back from the edge of the road” be added.

### **Assessors: Continue discussion with Town Attorney regarding stipulated judgment order regarding value of Pine Lake Estate, LLC**

Attorney Bob Fisher joined the meeting by phone for this discussion on the Pine Lake tax appeal. The property in question is unique due to the size of the structure, the quality, and the acreage. The stipulation agreement basically splits the difference between the town’s assigned value after the town wide reappraisal and the value determined by an independent appraiser hired by the property owner. Mr. Fisher recommended accepting the agreement because the cost of the difference is roughly what it would cost in legal fees to fight it, but the value would be set for three years, so the board should take that into consideration as well. The Selectboard considered the Board of Civil Authority’s unanimous denial of change in value during their hearing. Mr. Purjes’s appeal was based more on thinking the process used to determine the new value was wrong, not necessarily the value. After more discussion, **a motion was made by Craig Hammer to reject the offer in the stipulated judgement order, seconded by James Weber, three in favor, Mr. Tefft opposed.** Mr. Fisher will notify the court and property owner’s attorney.

**Errors and Omissions Certificate** The assessors must file a Certificate of Errors and Omissions to the Vermont Department of Taxes by December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. The Selectboard reviewed the document and signed off on three of the parcels listed. The fourth parcel was related to the topic above. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve the Errors and Omissions Certificate not including Pine Lake Estate and to appoint James Weber to sign it, seconded by Rick Gramlin, all in favor.**

### **Other business:**

**Culvert review and sign Acknowledgment of Substantial Completion** Hunter Excavating would like this document signed to release the hold we had placed on the surety bond. Attorney Fisher has reviewed the letter and approved the signing of it but would like a punch list attached which has been signed by Hunter, MSK & the town. **A motion was made by Rick Gramlin to approve the Acknowledgement of Substantial Completion of the culvert project and to appoint James Weber to sign it, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

**Other** Gig suggested that the Selectboard should offer some form of thanks to Riggs Distler for housing the Treasurer during the culvert project when property taxes were due. The board suggested providing lunch for the Riggs office employees and sending a thank you note.

### **Adjourn**

**A motion to adjourn was made by James Weber, seconded by Skip Tefft, all in favor.**

James Weber adjourned the meeting at 7:56pm.

Respectfully submitted, ~Gig Zboray