

Town of Colrain
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting
Colrain Highway Garage
9 Jacksonville Road
4:30 PM
MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD
March 11, 2025

Present

Emily Thurber (Chair), Ben Eastman, Katie Korby

Others Present

Diana Parsons (Town Administrator), Marjorie Smith (Administrative Assistant)

Call to Order

Emily Thurber, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM. She noted that the meeting was being recorded and was held in a hybrid format.

Executive Session

The Select Board entered into executive session pursuant to Mass General Law Chapter 30A Section 21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, including the highway superintendent, treasurer collector, director of assessing, and town administrator.

Emily Thurber moved to enter executive session. Ben Eastman seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

The Board reconvened in open session at 5:58pm.

Consent Items

- Approve Minutes of February 11, 2025 - *not presented*
- Warrant AP2535 in the amount of \$38,648.23
- Warrant PR2517 in the amount of \$51,515.79
- Warrant AP2536 in the amount of \$12,220.47

Emily Thurber moved to approve the consent agenda items. Katie Korby seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Appointments and Resignations

Request for Appointment to Zoning Board of Appeals as Alternate: Matthew Lovett

Matt Lovett expressed his interest in the position, noting his background in construction and concerns about issues like water management for projects such as cell towers.

Emily Thurber moved to appoint Matt Lovett as an alternate on the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term ending June 30, 2027. Ben Eastman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Request from Town Clerk to Vote to Keep Historic Ballot Box for Local Elections

Diana Parsons explained that the Town Clerk had requested to keep the historic ballot box for use in local elections, while using the new DS200 tabulator for all other elections.

Ben Eastman moved to keep the historic ballot box for local elections and use the DS200 tabulator for all other elections. Emily Thurber seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Accept Donation of \$3,000 from Friends of the Library for Griswold Memorial Library

Diana Parsons noted this was a routine donation made by the Friends of the Library to support library programs and services.

Ben Eastman moved to accept the \$3,000 donation from the Friends of the Library for use by Griswold Memorial Library. Emily Thurber seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Accept FY25 MVP Planning 2.0 Grant in the amount of \$100,000

Diana Parsons clarified that the grant amount was \$175,000, not \$100,000 as listed on the agenda. She explained this was a joint municipal vulnerability preparedness grant with the town of Charlemont to conduct planning efforts and potentially fund a project benefiting both towns.

Ben Eastman moved to accept the FY25 MVP Planning 2.0 grant for Colrain and Charlemont in the amount of \$175,000. Emily Thurber seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

FY26 Budget Meetings

Highway Department Budget Presentation

Diana Parsons presented the proposed FY26 highway department budget. The discussion focused on several key aspects of the highway department budget. Staffing levels were examined, particularly the potential addition of new positions. There were salary considerations, including a new lower-level position that would start at \$22 per hour, with potential increases for obtaining licenses. Equipment needs and capital planning were also addressed, alongside a potential reallocation of overtime budgeting from the general highway budget to the winter roads budget. Training and professional development needs for the staff were discussed, as well as the transfer station budget, which might see potential increases in tipping fees.

The Board and Finance Committee members asked questions about staffing, equipment replacement schedules, and budget line items. They discussed the need to update the town's capital plan to reflect current equipment costs.

Fire Department Budget Presentation

Fire Chief Nick Anzuoni presented the proposed FY26 fire department budget and highlighted several key points of discussion. The department is facing a 9% overall budget increase, largely attributed to increased training costs brought on by the addition of new firefighters and evolving requirements. There are also significant equipment needs, such as the replacement of aging gear. Staffing levels and the increases in call volume were other important considerations. Chief Anzuoni also discussed plans to replace the 2001 fire truck, with estimated costs around \$850,000, which contributes to the financial planning outlined in the proposed budget.

The Board discussed financing options for the fire truck, including using stabilization funds and potential debt exclusion. They agreed to further analyze the financial impacts and discuss them at a future meeting.

Police Department Budget Presentation

Police Chief Chris Lannon presented the proposed FY26 police department budget. Key points of discussion included a 5-6% overall budget increase, staffing structure and administrative support needs, training requirements and associated costs, equipment needs including body armor replacement, and vehicle replacement plans and associated costs.

The Board discussed administrative staffing options and the need to clarify the department's long-term staffing model.

Address Upcoming Meeting Dates

The Board and Finance Committee discussed upcoming meeting dates, including:

- March 18 - Joint meeting with Heath Select Board in Heath at 5:00 PM
- March 25 - Budget meeting with school representatives
- March 19 - Executive session at 4:00 PM
- April 8 - Regular meeting
- April 22 - Warrant signing

Administrator Updates

Update Following Pole Hearing re 116 New County Road; Statement from Tree Warden

A recent pole hearing was conducted for a site on 116 New County Road. Initially, a tree was planned to be removed, but after evaluation, the tree warden found that more than 60% of the tree was still living. Eversource agreed to leave the tree standing and remove only dead branches, moving the pole next to the tree instead. This decision was met with some objections from Nate Gilbert and Mike Slowinski, who felt the tree should be taken down due to concerns about broadband infrastructure reliability. Diana Parsons stood by the tree warden's decision, noting it aligns with Mass General Law.

Attended Governor Healey's Transportation Road Show in Conway; Colrain's Chapter 90 Allocation of \$572,696.88

Diana attended the transportation roadshow where increases in Chapter 90 funding were announced, with the Town of Colrain set to receive a significant boost in allocations for rural roads maintenance. This increase is partially due to advocacy for supporting rural communities with extensive road networks, demonstrating the town's role in initiating changes to funding formulas.

Attended Site Visit at Barnhardt re Colrain Sewer District & Locating Wastewater Treatment

Alongside other officials, Diana attended a site visit at Barnhardt concerning the Colrain Sewer District. State and other representatives were present, reflecting the considerable attention the issue has received. Barnhardt proposed a potential septic solution using part of their site. Despite significant interest, complex regulatory challenges and financial implications for the town remain under review. Discussions with DEP and stakeholders continue as possible actions are considered.

Attended OIG Academy – 30B Overview Basics & Beyond – Renewing MCPPO

Diana is working on renewing her MCPPO.

Attended CDS Working Group Meeting – Continued Work on Treatment Solution

Diana mentioned ongoing efforts to address the Colrain Sewer District situation, considering the financial and regulatory complexities involved. Potential legal ramifications for the town require that options for legal representation be seriously considered moving forward, as negotiations and decisions become more complex.

Attended OSD Meeting w Minutes Software Demonstration w Maggie

Diana and Maggie attended an OSD demonstration highlighting state contracts and procurement options, including an advanced minutes software. Although costly, its capability to search video timestamps was impressive, prompting the town to explore more affordable options to enhance efficiency and record-keeping.

Public Comment

None

Requests for Future Agenda Items

March 18 – Joint Meeting with Heath Select Board in Heath

The Select Board scheduled a joint meeting with the Heath Select Board on March 18 at 5:00 PM in Heath. Diana Parsons emphasized the importance of attending to address collaborative topics for both towns and to ensure effective communication of Colrain's interests.

Schedule Executive Session

The Board discussed and decided to schedule another strategy executive session for 3/19/2025 from 4:00 - 6:00 pm.

Correspondence and Select Board Informational Items

None

Dissolve Meeting

Emily Thurber moved to dissolve the meeting at 8:39pm. Katie Korby seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

These draft minutes were created using ClerkMinutes, an AI-powered platform that transcribes meetings, identifies speakers, and generates professional minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

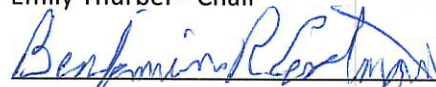


Marjorie Smith
Administrative Assistant

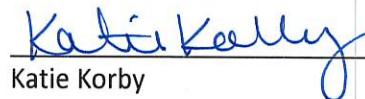
Accepted by the Select Board on 4/8/2025



Emily Thurber - Chair



Benjamin Eastman



Katie Korby

Documents Distributed to the Select Board Before the Meeting in a Packet or at the Meeting:

Email from Matt Lovett to Diana Parsons dated 3/6/2025 re: Appointment to Zoning Board of Appeals

MVP 2.0 Contract

Draft FY2026 Budget Workbook

FY26 Budget Meeting Schedule for Select Board and Finance Committee

Summary for 116 New County Rd from Tes Siarnaki, Tree Warden