

**Town of Litchfield**  
**Select Board Meeting Minutes**  
**February 10, 2025**

**1.0 Convenes 6:30 PM; Pledge to Flag; Selectmen and Guests present;**

Selectmen: Gary Parker, Chairman; Clarence Gowell III (identified as Rick in these minutes) (via Zoom); Scott Weeks.

Staff: Kelly Weissenfels, Town Manager; Michael Sherman, Fire Chief; Larry Nadeau, Road Comm. (absent); John Upham, Transfer Station Manager(absent); Tom Wood, Chm. Budget Comm.; Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer (absent); and others per the sign in sheet.

**2.0 Minutes of January 27th, 2025**

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes from January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 Zoom).

**3.0 Reports and Correspondence**

3.1 Town Manager

A. General assistance / fuel fund requests are starting to pick up during the continued cold of winter.

B. The Town Office will likely be closed Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 due to the impending storm that is predicted to last all day.

C. Kelly also reminded all that Monday is a holiday.

D. Mr. Hersom's mailbox has been replaced. Per Kelly, Mr. Wheeler reports that the survey pin in question (see January's meetings) remains where it was originally placed. Kelly will contact Mr. Hersom with this information.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

A. Kelly expects Steve to be at the next meeting.

B. 1. Per Kelly, the town's legal counsel had sent an update on the Lahey case since last meeting. Mr. McCall attended a conference where the Lahey family requested their lawsuit against the town be dropped. The town agrees that it is better to use the Land Use Ordinance enforcement steps instead of arguing about validity of the agreement letter. The next step is to assess where everything sits in the spring and move forward from there.

B. 2. Also, the Lahey family has sent more correspondence regarding turning their subdivision back into a single property. Kelly provided additional guidance on what they need to do moving forward.

3.3 Road Commissioner

Per Kelly, Larry is out tonight recovering from the last set of storms and preparing for the next round of storms coming.

A. Kelly felt there needed to be clarification regarding plow trucks discussed at the last meeting. Larry had stated that plow trucks are emergency vehicles, and he would like to see people slow down, pull over, etc. Plow trucks are not considered emergency vehicles in Maine law. They follow the same rules of the road as all regular vehicles. The intent of the comment was to have people on the roads recognize that the vehicles are large, and the crew needs space and time to complete the job they set out to do. Please slow down and give them space.

#### 3.4 Fire & Rescue

A. Chief Sherman wanted to let everyone know there will be more ice water rescue training coming up in March. Chief Sherman reports that this will give the department all the training as well as the certification needed to utilize the equipment that was purchased last year.

B. The Kubota is back on its tracks again.

C. Engine Sixty-Five was out for repairs due to damage to the front bumper. The truck is back in service at this time with a repaired bumper. Once the correct bumper is sent up to O'Connors, the bumper will be replaced. The headlights have been upgraded to LED headlights at an additional expense. Chief Sherman reports this makes all the difference in the world!

D. Engine Sixty-Seven is headed out tomorrow for fuel tank service, the tank was damaged at some point. Chief Sherman has plans already in place to maintain appropriate services for the town should the need arise. Trucks will be moved around to cover the needs that may come up while the truck is out of service. He suspects the truck will be out for 3-4 days.

#### 3.5 Emergency Mgmt.

Nothing additional to report tonight.

#### 3.6 Assessing Agent

Ellery will be in the office this coming Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, weather permitting.

#### 3.7 Transfer Station

A. John has taken a couple of well-deserved weeks of vacation during this time.

B. The Transfer Station has been relatively quiet, as is normal during the Winter months.

#### 3.8 Other Town Committees

### **4.0 Scheduled Business**

#### 4.1 Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed / Tacoma Lakes Association / Cobbossee Lake Association budget request presentation

Jennifer Peasnall, of Friends of Cobbossee, along with representatives of TLS and CLA attended the meeting to share the presentation. They are requesting \$17,800.00 to maintain the lakes and aid with removal of invasive plant life therein. They are hoping to

still provide the same courtesy boat inspection program(s) on the currently attended lakes. They also will be looking to utilize the services of New England Milfoil. There has been some pretty good success with this company and maintenance removal of the Milfoil. The use of herbicide treatment was also discussed as being used in other towns. When this is determined to be the best course of action the State gets more involved and is the contacting entity to the town as well as the residents on the lake/stream/pond in question. This hasn't been deemed needed in Litchfield to date. Jennifer noted significantly that the invasive aquatic plant Swollen Bladderwort has been found in Pleasant Pond around the boat ramps and this will be included in the invasive plant control plan.

#### 4.2 Easy Street - Jason Morgan

Mr. Morgan and his wife were in attendance to discuss from his perspective the incident mentioned at the last meeting with regard to discontinuing a portion of Easy Street and try to quash rumors that he has heard about it. Mr. Pat Gagon spoke in support of checking on strangers who may be parked and walking near your driveway and said he had recommended that Mr. Morgan call the Sheriff. Mr. Toby Jutras, who was the person of concern in the incident read his written record of the events. Mr. Morgan and Mr. Jutras were thanked for their time. The discussion may be viewed at the 104 minutes, 14 seconds point in the Feb 10, 2025 select board video, and the statement by the Road Commissioner at the 25 minutes, 45 seconds point in the Jan 27, 2025 select board video. The videos may be accessed from the Town Website at <https://www.litchfieldmaine.org/town-government/agendas-minutes/selectmen/>.

Mr. Gagnon also made a statement about mailboxes that were hit, he pointed out that it wasn't just Mr. Doyle's mailbox, but a total of seven mailboxes on the one post that the Road Commissioner had mentioned in the previous meeting. Mr. Gagnon said he was not looking for compensation. He recommended that contact and communication to those affected, letting them know the circumstances (long night of driving for example) and that driver was sorry, would go a long way toward providing good customer service.

Rick noted that at the time the Easy Street incident originally came up he has requested that when a member of town government gets sent out for a job such as what Toby was sent out on, there should be a magnet sign for the vehicle and/or a safety vest with the town emblem on it. Also, Rick will check with the town attorney if they do need something in writing for this type of complaint or complaint in general. Gary noted also that Kelly has a policy in the works regarding mailbox replacement and when the town should and shouldn't be responsible.

#### 4.3 Planning Board solar moratorium report– Alan Plummer, Paul Hempstead

Alan Plummer gave a report regarding the performance standards since the Planning Board is making progress in this regard. They are purposely staying away from smaller scale home based solar arrays. Both Alan and Paul agree (stated) that the moratorium needs to be extended to get them to the Town Meeting.

#### 4.4 Consider extending the solar moratorium until the Annual Town Meeting

There was a motion made by Scott to extend the current Solar Moratorium to the Litchfield Town Meeting which will be held in June of 2025.

The motion was amended to Extend the Solar Moratorium for a full 6 months, this was seconded. The vote passed 2-0 (1 Zoom).

#### 4.5 Winter Sand Bid

Kelly handed out the bid for review. Kelly would like to have this reviewed and then approved at this meeting as he would like to move forward. Larry asked to get this done today so not to run out of sand/salt since this has historically been done in August.

There was a motion made by Scott to put out for bid the Winter Sand delivery with the sand being delivered by Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

#### 4.6 Transfer Station Hauling Bid

Kelly reports that he and the Transfer Station Manager are happy with the current contractor. It has, however, been 3 years so he will put it out to bid if the Select Board would like him to. Kelly is recommending extending the contract; the only changes would be the tipping fees as time goes on. Scott wanted to make sure that due diligence was done, and guidelines were followed. Gary stated that he has looked at other companies and the contracts, fees, etc. and the prices were not even comparable [more paperwork, higher cost]. Tom Wood stated that it was not just a price, but the level of service that is important. Rick agrees with Scott and asked Kelly to reach out to other towns to see what they are paying to be sure the Town isn't paying too much. Kelly will do this for the next meeting so the Select Board can move forward with a motion to approve or put this out to bid.

#### 4.7 Budget review

Kelly had planned to discuss the road committee's recommendations, but the committee had not met yet with the latest budget numbers, so after talking with Toby, Kelly rescheduled the meeting.

Kelly said he has a list of potential couple special projects that can be discussed as well as the Capital Improvement Plan. Capital Improvement is the 15 year look-ahead at large purchases that the town is putting money away for so we are not surprised by a large purchase that could have been planned for. The Fire Department, Public Works and a couple other departments have items/improvement plans for the future that Kelly has listed out for the Select Board. There are no major purchases coming for this fiscal year (FY).

Kelly reviewed the potential Special and Capitol Projects to give the board and a chance to think about these.

Woodbury Dam needs improvements including the metal spillway shield that needs to be replaced, surface cracks that need to be repaired and leaking lift gates that may need replacement.

Woodbury Pond Park has been mainly funded through the gate fees as well as donations. However, Kelly said the changing room roof is leaking and the roof should be

replaced; this would cost roughly \$4,000-\$5,000. Kelly asked if the Select Board would consider taking the money from contingency funds. He will leave that as a discussion point. The park has been seeing an increase of \$4-5 hundred dollars through the gate fees, etc. However, there is not enough to cover repair costs. The Select Board requested a spring walk-through to get a feel for the projects needing to be done. Rick wanted to be clear that no decisions would be made during that time, this would simply be a better way of making sure the whole board knows what improvements are needed and how to present them to the residents that attend Town Meeting. Gary wants to make sure that the improvements, etc., are going to be made by citizens of the town fundraising and "boots on the ground" work. He did not want Kelly, the Road Crew or the Select Board to take the lead on the projects.

Kelly would like to go to the Litchfield Farmer's Club to get permission to extend the parking lot pavement project to the back side of the Town Office. This would make it easier for visitors to park to utilize the wheelchair ramp, and provide as well as more parking spaces for larger vehicles. The section in question is between the Fairgrounds and the Town office closest to the Hallowell Road. Board members supported taking those steps.

Kelly wants the town to be prepared for the cost of the next revaluation that is coming. This is the year to start moving forward with that. Kelly will find out a cost for "quarters" where 25% of the town properties are visited each year to verify records, and discover changes that may have missed the permitting process. At the end of four years the property surveys would be complete and revaluation could occur. This will continue to be a topic of discussion as Town Meeting draws near. Gary suggested having another presentation on how the process will move forward and what the next four years would look like.

Maxwell Cemetery at the end of Wenzel Road on Rt. 197 in Litchfield was damaged recently. Kelly said he would call it a hit and run since it was observed that a truck drove into the cemetery through the fence and may have damaged a few headstones in the process. The snow is currently covering the extent of the damage. In the spring Kelly will check the extent of the damage and find a cost to repair. He will check to see if the town's insurance covers repair since this is a town cemetery.

The Fuel Depot has been a recent topic of discussion and there has also been a select board workshop recently where all codes, problems and options for correction were discussed. The plan moving forward is to have Simard and Sons prepare a formal engineering plan be sure that all will be legal moving forward. it will be legal with an engineer's stamp of approval. At that point the project would be put out to bid. This report may be available within the next couple few weeks.

Larry has asked Kelly to add the Town Garage to the needs list. This needs to be investigated as repairs and upgrades are needed, per Larry. Recently the Town of West Gardiner built a new facility. Kelly recommended visiting their site to possibly use as a starting point.

Capital Improvement Plan:

Kelly handed out the printouts showing what he has thus far for the fire department. He explained what's coming and how the funds are adding up. There was time to discuss and ask questions.

Chief Sherman also took the time to explain that each line item increased as needed.

## **5.0 Unscheduled Business**

5.1 Rick apologized publicly for some comments he considered to be less professional than they should have been that he made to Scott during the fuel depot workshop the previous Thursday. Scott said he had known Rick a long time, thanked him, and said it was not a problem.

## **6.0 Appointments/Resignations (Rick in attendance via Zoom, his votes not observed)**

6.1 Resignation – Assistant Chief of Rescue, Tina Gowell

There was a motion made by Scott to accept the resignation of Tina Gowell as the Assistant Chief of Rescue with deep regrets. The motion was seconded by Gary, vote Board members spoke, wanting to make sure that she knows that she has been a huge asset and wants her to know she is deeply appreciated! Chief Sherman echoed their sentiments and noted that she will remain on with the Fire Association.

6.2 Appointment – Assistant Chief of Rescue, Jay Danforth

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Jay Danforth to the Assistant Chief of Rescue. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

6.3 Appointment – Ambulance Advisory Committee Representative, Juli Laroche

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Juli Laroche to the Ambulance Advisory Committee as the Representative. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

## **7.0 Warrants**

7.1 Town Warrant #15 \$428,278.78 (of which \$371,544.55 is for RSU4)

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Warrant #15 in the amount of \$428,278.78 (of which \$371,544.55 is for RSU4). This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0

7.2 Town Payroll #16 \$38,807.06

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Payroll #16 in the amount of \$38,807.06. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

## **8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication**

8.1 Scott said in the past there was discussion of a certificate or award of recognition. He would like to see Tina get one of these awards. Gary agreed with this, and Kelly said he has already has it on his task list.

8.2 Tom would like to know if Kelly has heard anything regarding the Personal Property Tax legislature that is on going right now? Kelly said he has not heard anything recently and will contact Rep. Greenwood to get an update.

8.3 Also Tom reminded the Select Board about the meeting that was discussed with the Turnpike Authority to gain more information about getting help from them with recovering Fire and Emergency expenses.

## **9.0 Future Agenda Items**

9.1 Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Program

## **10.0 Adjournment** at 9:04pm

Respectfully submitted, Angela Parker and Kelly Weissenfels.