

Town of Litchfield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
April 28, 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) - absent; Scott Weeks.

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

*** For the recorded video, sound and picture start at 9 minutes, 36 seconds. ***

2.0 Minutes of April 14th, 2025

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

Steve presented building permits for the month of March and said permits and inspections have really picked up for spring

3.3 Road Commissioner

Larry said that tree / brush grinding continues on Oak Hill Road. They plan to have an arborist cut the larger trees and any branches that are in wires.

3.4 Fire & Rescue

Chief Sherman noted there were two structure fires in the past week, one appeared to be caused by an electric car catching fire. Board members noted the difficulty of putting out battery fires and Chief Sherman concurred, stating the department has trained on electric vehicle fires.

3.5 Emergency Management

A. Chief Sherman attended a training sessions recently pertaining to pipelines. Both agencies that have pipelines that pass through Litchfield put on the training. Chief Sherman looks to build his department's own response knowledge should any emergencies happen in the future.

B. Gary asked if Chief Sherman has made any progress on streamlining the process of getting approval to use the Carrie Ricker School as the Warming/Cooling Shelter when needed. Chief Sherman said not yet but it's on his list.

3.6 Assessing Agent

Ellery Bane will be available on Thursday May 1, 2025.

3.7 Transfer Station

A. There was a bulky bin emptied this week as well as the cardboard bin.

B. Also, 6 new transfer station admittance stickers issued.

C. Swap Shop attendees have seen a good start to the season. There have been 326 items taken so far since opening.

D. There has been an increase in residents coming in. Some have been looking to utilize the brush pile which doesn't open until the first weekend in May.

3.8 Other Town Committees

A. Tom Wood said the Budget Committee meeting will be held Wednesday May 7, 2025.

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 263 Dennis Hill Road ditching request – Steve Heald

Mr. Heald was in attendance to present a solution to a “ponding” situation that has been happening in the field by the down hill side of his driveway during the winter for several years. Larry as well as previous Road Commissioners have been to the site to evaluate the issue and contractors have also looked at the area in question. Mr. Heald would like the driveway raised so that water flow from the west would divert, or flow, past the crest of the hill in the opposite direction. It was noted in the past that there is a ledge that would need to be removed by blasting. Mr. Heald suggested that putting his driveway back to where it was prior to the ditching would solve the problem. After discussing options, the Board was not in favor of any action by the town, and agreed with Mr. Heald that he has the right to modify his driveway himself and return to discuss with the board if it doesn't work.

4.2 Huntington Hill Road – revisiting line requests

Gary noted this topic has come up in multiple select board meetings and every time, the they were not in favor of spending money to put lines on any of the town's roads. Gary himself is adamantly opposed to lining the roads. Scott indicated he did not have a strong opinion either way. Discussion revolved around the feel of small town roads not having lines, and the thought that lines encourage faster driving.

4.3 Changes to proposed capital road improvement budget – Toby Jutras

Toby presented the Road Advisory Committee's proposal. The Committee has put together a survey that was handed out. There are 4 key recommendations as follows:

- A. Pinetree road deteriorated at a faster rate than expected. The committee would like to see a plan from All States for warranty work for Pinetree Road. Per Larry All States Materials Group has put Pinetree Road on the list for repair, Larry believes this has been scheduled for July, barring any issues with weather.
- B. There is a bridge that is being planned for Dennis Hill Road (replacing the Dennis Hill Stream culvert), and the Road Advisory Committee suggests delaying putting down the final wearing surface for a year, until after the bridge project has been completed. per the Road Advisory Committee.
- C. Per the Road Advisory Committee there are several roads that are in line to be resurfaced, and they believe that there could be some longevity added to the

road surfaces by crack sealing. This will help water to shed from the road instead of soaking in and wreaking havoc.

- D. The roads in town seem to be holding up well, in the committee's opinion. Winter, particularly plowing, is hard on the roads. The Road Advisory Committee would recommend and would like to see a focus on ditching and getting the shoulders well maintained.

Including these recommended changes, including taking Upper Pond Road off this year's budget, the committee was able to reduce the recommended budget \$609,000, a significant savings over the previous draft.

Scott asked if there was any update regarding the bridge on Rt. 197/Richmond Road being completed. Larry said that [MDOT] has put it out to bid and have a possible plan for October/November time-frame. There was a recommendation to try and get the State to come out and look at the end of the Small Road to measure to be able to assess damage from the upcoming. Larry doesn't think it's likely it will happen, but he thinks it's a good idea and will see if it's possible.

Also, the Litchfield state roads are being paved again this year, nothing being fixed, just covered again.

Gary requested that the Road Advisory Committee look at the dirt roads and dead-end roads in town and devise a maintenance plan for those as well. He would like to see a standard set for maintenance of dirt roads; he would like to see them proactively be maintained vs. reactively maintained. Toby agreed this would be beneficial for the residents and the town.

4.4 Open hauling contract bids (7 pm) * Taken out of order due to time.

Per Kelly 2 bids were received. Gary proceeded with opening and reading aloud.

A. Kelly Brother's Disposal. LLC

Bulky: \$500.00 / haul, \$175/ton to Fairfield.

Cardboard: \$500.00 / haul, Lewiston Town Contract

Paper: \$500.00 / haul, Lewiston Town Contract

Glass: \$500.00 / haul, to Fairfield

Tin: \$500.00 / haul, Lewiston Town Contract

Plastic \$600.00 / haul, Lewiston Town Contract

B. Corcoran Environmental Services, Inc.

Bulky: Monthly Rental charge \$100.00 (total), \$250.00 / haul, \$175 / ton

Cardboard: \$250.00 / haul

Paper: \$250.00 / haul

Clean Glass ONLY: \$250.00 / haul, + \$25 / ton

Tin: \$250.00 / haul

Mixed Plastic \$250.00 / haul

There was a motion made by Scott to accept the Corcoran Environmental Services bid for hauling for the Transfer Station beginning July 1, 2025. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 absent).

4.5 Open fuel depot contract bids (after hauling bids)

Gaftek - Total Price: \$495,600.00

Simard and Sons - Total Price: \$256,339.00

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the bid presented by Simard and Sons for placing the underground tanks, in the amount of \$256,339.00. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 absent).

4.6 Jungle Lane – Order of Discontinuance, set public hearing

Kelly handed out the draft of the Order of Discontinuance pertaining to Jungle Lane. Once approved by the town at Town Meeting it be filed with the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds. The portion of the road to be discontinued starts at the Plains Road and continues the entire length of Jungle Lane, approximately 0.08 miles (noted: there are no deeds or proof showing town ownership of Jungle Lane). A public easement will not be retained, and all rights of public travel will be terminated. No damages will be awarded. A copy of the order will be filed with the town clerk.

There needs to be a Public Hearing which Kelly recommends holding at the next Select Board meeting on May 12, 2025, hearing to start at 7pm (Meeting starts at 6:30pm).

There was a motion made by Scott to set May 12, 2025, at 7pm for the public hearing for the discontinuation of Jungle Lane. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

Per Mr. Wood, all affected parties agree that this is the appropriate action and all paperwork/documentation, etc is done and in order.

4.7 Personal property tax – continued

Per Kelly, Rep. Greenwood has notified the town that the requested legislation is scheduled for [public comment] this coming Thursday May 1, 2025 (10 am), with the Taxation Committee. This is to try and get the current \$1,000.00 exemption for individual on personal property tax raised to \$5,000.00. Rep. Greenwood would like to have the Town Manager and the members of the Select Board, at minimum, provide testimony during the meeting. Kelly has also invited the Chairman of the Budget Committee, Mr. Wood, who has accepted.

Kelly has researched, as requested by Gary, a previous statement made regarding the delivery of notice for personal property tax being included in the Town Report. Kelly notes this is not an appropriate way to deliver notice. Per Gary, there will be a letter sent out to all residents in the town of Litchfield informing them that any personal property that they have that is over \$1,000.00 is subject to tax. Gary stated that he is completely and adamantly opposed to the personal property tax. Scott would like to see a brief history of this entire situation, this would help people understand that the Town of Litchfield isn't making this up and why it's being done.

Time was allotted for discussion and questions.

Two residents have asked a representative from the taxation department to come to a Select Board meeting to discuss and answer questions regarding personal property tax requirements. Kelly will reach out and see if he can find someone to attend a meeting.

There was a motion made by Scott to direct the Town Manager to send out letters to the taxpayers for personal property tax. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

4.8 Sign RSU4 budget validation referendum warrants

There was a motion made by Scott to sign the RSU4 budget validation referendum. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

4.9 Budget

Kelly handed out the next draft of the budget to the Select Board and visitors. Time was allotted for review by the Select Board.

Main Changes:

Money needs to be added into the Academy Building Maintenance

A. Lights \$12,000.00

B. \$2,000.00 annually for reserve account, maintenance.

Mr. Wood said that there should be two new reserve accounts created to keep running balances of the cemetery maintenance and then one for the Academy Building maintenance.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the creation of two reserve accounts, one for the Veteran's Memorial Cemetery (\$1,000.00 annually) and the other for the Academy Building (\$14,000.00). This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

Gary would like the leftover funds from the fence repair last year placed into the Litchfield Plains Road Veterans Memorial Cemetery's new reserve account. Scott found line item 44 on page 11 shows an appropriation of \$7,600.00 showing none has been spent. Gary pointed out line item \$4,400.00 dollars spent. Kelly will make find the net spent.

Katie asked if the Community Cares Backpack Program should be showing up on this list she was handed. Kelly stated that yes, it will be there. It's been added to the budget, but didn't print.

4.10 Projected Revenue

Kelly handed out projected revenue chart with minimal no changes from the previous meeting. Showing a reduction in State Revenue Sharing, Kelly is recommending the town stay with the current projected values assignment. He said there is roughly \$70,000.00 interest on investments this year, but would recommend keeping this current projection [\$40,000] , in the case the Fed lowers interest rates this year [which affects money market rates].

4.11 Draft Town Warrant

Kelly will finalize numbers and get the draft to the Budget Committee for their meeting on May 7, 2025. Mr. Wood gave notes on what the Budget Committee voted on at the last meeting.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1 Woodbury Pond Park Discussion

Sue Weber was in attendance to present her views after taking over planning for Woodbury Pond Park. She has been to the park this year to evaluate the area, and she believes the park and structures need work to be able to be safe for those that attend. She is asking for \$5,000.00 to fix the changing room roof before it becomes a bigger issue. She would also like to see an annual \$5,000.00 for maintenance, since the park itself is not self-sustaining. Kelly and Ms. Weber have discussed recently an option of possibly having a full-time resident manager of Woodbury Pond Park (similar to a campground attendant). In exchange for being able to camp there for the summer, they would be responsible for maintaining the Park. Ms. Weber said there is already someone interested in the option. Scott stated he thinks this is a good idea and Gary said he isn't opposed to the idea.

Lindsay Nelsen said she sent a budget proposal to the select board members and has also noted there is a lot of work. She would like to see the park have full-time employees and see things get fixed. She would like to see the park have a dedicated budget and has suggested a rough number of \$37,000.00.

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

6.1 Appointment: Budget Committee – Mary-Jane Blanchard

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Mary-Jane Blanchard to the Budget Committee. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

6.2 Appointment: Historic Preservation Commission – Edward Avis; Rayna Leibowitz

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Edward Avis; Rayna Leibowitz to the Historic Preservation Commission. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

6.3 Appointment: Conservation Commission – Diane Clay

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Diane Clay to the Conservation Commission. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

6.4 Appointment: Woodbury Pond Dam Advisory Committee – Paul Pinette; Terry Averill

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Paul Pinette & Terry Averill to the Woodbury Pond Dam Advisory Committee. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

6.5 Appointment: Smithfield Plantation Board of Trustees – Carol Smith

There was a motion made to appoint Carol Smith to the Smithfield Plantation Board of Trustees. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #20 \$86,658.76

There was a motion made by Scott to approve town warrant #20 in the amount of \$86,658.76. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

7.2 Town Payroll #21 \$36,523.84

There was a motion made by Scott to approve town payroll #21 in the amount of \$36,523.84. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Kelly has information about options for a new town attorney. Our current attorney, Ben McCall recommended a couple of options for Kelly to move forward with. Information pertaining to all options was given to the Select Board for review and they will discuss it at a later meeting.

8.2 Rayna Leibowitz said that the Historical Society has met and started cleaning up the town [museum] building. When the board does its review of the town she would like to have them look at the town house and possibly get the 2 bottom rows of clapboards repaired as the sills are in danger if not repaired.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Town properties that are available for sale

10.0 Adjournment at 9:26 pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker and Kelly Weissenfels