

**MINUTES SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
INFORMATIONAL MEETING
5:30 P.M. THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Chair
Shari Cornish, Vice Chair
Tim Ricciardello
Larry Fliegelman
Derek Richardson

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Finance Director
Tonia Chase, Town Clerk/Treasurer
Kristen Leahy, Zoning/Floodplain Admin.
Kathy Unser

Others Present

Paul Fixx
Norma Spaulding
Rachel Kane
Grace Johnstone
Ross Connelly

Special Meeting

5:31 P.M. Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Chair, called the Informational Meeting to order.

5:31 P.M. Set/adjust agenda - none

5:31 P.M. – 5:54 P.M. Item #1 Select Board Chair to summarize Article 1 (\$25,000 for Town Forest) on the May 19, 2026, Special Town Meeting warning and give audience opportunity to share their thoughts

Select Board Chair Ceilidh Galloway-Kane summarized Article 1 on the May 19, 2026, Special Town Meeting warning regarding a proposed \$25,000 Town contribution toward the acquisition of approximately 329 acres on Buffalo Mountain for a Town Forest. Ceilidh read the article aloud and invited questions and comments from the audience.

Rachel Kane of the Hardwick Conservation Commission (HCC) asked whether the HCC would be permitted to present information about the project at the Special Town Meeting. David Upson stated that it would ultimately be up to the Moderator, but likely yes.

Kathy Unser asked why the article was being reconsidered. Ceilidh explained that a valid petition with the required number of signatures had been submitted, requiring the Town to hold a Special Town Meeting to reconsider the article. The Select Board selected an evening meeting time based on prior public feedback and was required to hold the meeting at the same location as the original Town Meeting.

Ross Connelly asked whether the Town's \$25,000 contribution would be returned to the Town at closing. It was clarified that while \$25,000 would accompany the transfer to the Town, those funds would be restricted for future maintenance and stewardship of the property and would not reimburse the Town's contribution.

Grace Johnstone asked whether the Town Forest could generate income. Rachel Kane stated that it potentially could through activities such as sugaring, depending on the future stewardship plan.

Discussion occurred regarding maintenance costs for other Town Forests, including Wolcott's. Rachel Kane stated she had heard Wolcott spent approximately \$1,000 annually, while Derek Richardson noted his understanding that costs were higher due to trail maintenance and mowing expenses.

Paul Fixx asked how many individuals had expressed interest in serving on the steering committee. The Board indicated that eight individuals had expressed interest, and appointments were expected at the May 21 meeting.

Ross Connelly asked whether the land purchase would still proceed if the article failed. It was explained that the acquisition could still move forward, but the Town would not provide the \$25,000 contribution. The contribution demonstrates local support to outside funders.

Kathy Unser asked how the May 19 meeting was being publicized. The Board stated that notice had been posted in newspapers, on the Town website, through Front Porch Forum, and at the Town's regular posting locations.

Paul Fixx asked whether the Select Board had a preferred outcome on the article. Board members stated that they did not and instead hoped for strong voter turnout. Paul also asked how the article was originally placed on the warning. The Board explained that it believed the decision should be made by the voters at Town Meeting.

Ross Connelly asked for clarification regarding ownership of the property if the article failed. The Board stated that the Town would still acquire the property as a Town Forest provided the stewardship plan was completed and accepted prior to closing. Hannah Redmon commented at a previous meeting that she was optimistic that additional funding sources could be secured if needed. Rachel Kane added that the Town contribution demonstrates community commitment to grant funders.

5:54 P.M. – 6:06 P.M. Item #2 Select Board Chair to summarize Article 2 (move all future voting to Australian ballot) on the May 19, 2026, Special Town Meeting warning and give audience opportunity to share their thoughts

Select Board Chair Ceilidh Galloway-Kane summarized Article 2 on the May 19, 2026, Special Town Meeting warning regarding whether all future Annual and Special Town Meeting voting should be conducted exclusively by Australian ballot. Ceilidh read the article aloud and opened the floor for discussion.

Ceilidh explained that Town Meeting informational discussions could still occur prior to voting day, but all formal voting would occur by Australian ballot. She noted that the article also included elected officers for consistency and logistical purposes.

Ross Connelly asked whether discussion on articles would still occur if Article 2 passed. David Upson explained that some towns hold informational meetings prior to voting day to allow public discussion, though amendments cannot be made once voting is conducted solely by Australian ballot.

Audience members expressed concerns regarding attendance and voter participation. The Select Board encouraged residents to spread awareness of the May 19 meeting to maximize turnout. Ceilidh noted efforts to make the event more accessible and community-oriented, including potentially arranging for a taco truck outside the Town House.

Paul Fixx commented that the informational meeting was not listed on the Town calendar and questioned why elected officers were included in the proposed change without separate public input. Ceilidh responded that the Board viewed the inclusion of officers as a logistical matter and not an attempt to influence the outcome. She stated that it did not make sense to have only elected officers voted from the floor while all other articles were voted by Australian ballot.

Paul further commented that the original petition requested only one change and that the Select Board expanded the article. Ceilidh reiterated that the Board's intent was logistical rather than directive. David Upson added that articles voted from the floor could still be amended at Town Meeting.

Kathy Unser asked how many petition signatures were required. The Board stated that signatures equal to 5% of registered voters were required and that the petition exceeded that threshold.

Paul Fixx asked about the process for voter check-in at the May 19 meeting and whether the meeting start time would be delayed to accommodate attendance. The Board stated that meeting the Moderator would ultimately determine procedures. All registered voters will be expected to check in and get a card to vote. Tonia Chase noted that voter check-in would begin at 5:00 p.m.

Rachel Kane asked whether the change would take effect beginning with the next Town Meeting if approved. The Board stated that it would. Rachel also commented that she believed the article itself should be voted by Australian ballot, though the Board explained that current Town Meeting procedures do not allow for that process change in advance of the vote. Ceilidh noted that petitions may be submitted at any time, and the Town is required to respond accordingly.

Ceilidh reminded attendees about parking availability on Creamery Road and noted that parking attendants were expected to assist during the May 19 meeting.

6:06 P.M. Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Casey Rowell, Finance Director

Minutes approved by: _____
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Select Board Chair