



SELECT BOARD MEETING
Town of Southwest Harbor
Town Office & Via Zoom*
5:30 p.m. ~ Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Minutes

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** McFarland called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. **ROLL CALL:** Vice Chair Chapin McFarland, Natasha Johnson, Carolyn Ball, Dan Norwood, Finance Manager Becky Gatcomb, and Town Clerk Jennifer LaHaye. Noah Burby and Town Manager Karen Reddersen attended via Zoom.

A. **Excused Absences** (*if any*) None.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** *Request of the Town Manager for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.*

Johnson motioned amending the agenda to include discussion related to the removal of the appointment of the CEO and Special Town Meeting under regular business.

Town Clerk LaHaye noted the confirmation of the CEO was not on the agenda but was on the Manager's Memo. Johnson withdrew her motion.

Johnson motioned to amend the agenda to include discussion of the Special Town Meeting under regular business. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 5-0-0.

4. **APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:**

Town Payroll W#0122
School Payroll: #70

Trust & Agency: W#71
Conservation: W#0127

Johnson motioned to approve the Warrants as presented. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 5-0-0

5. **PUBLIC HEARING:**

A. **Liquor License Renewal – Jersey Lounge, LLC:** *Request of Jersey Lounge, LLC on behalf of Joey's Place, 11 Seal Cove Rd., SWH for an On-Premises Beer, Wine, and Spirits liquor license.*

Ball motioned to recommend approval of the application of Jersey Lounge, LLC on behalf of Joey's Place, 11 Seal Cove Rd. SWH, for an On-Premises Beer, Wine, and Spirits liquor license. Seconded by Burby. Vote: 4-0-1. Johnson recused herself.

B. Special Amusement Permit – Jersey Lounge, LLC: *Request of Jersey Lounge, LLC on behalf of Joey's Place, 11 Seal Cove Rd., SWH for a Class D- Special Amusement Permit.*

Ball motioned to recommend approval of the application of Jersey Lounge, LLC on behalf of Joey's Place, 11 Seal Cove Rd., SWH for a Class D/E Special Amusement Permit. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-1. Johnson recused herself.

6. REGULAR BUSINESS:

A. BUDGET RECAP: *Request of Chair to recap the budget before advancement to the Warrant Committee.*

Town Manager Reddersen made some general comments to Select Board members. She reports overall, she recognizes the draft budget is currently at 23.9% increase from last year. If the municipal budget did not increase from last year, the overall budget would still increase 16%, due to increases from the school, county taxes, etc. Factors that also increase the draft budget include higher licensing costs and roughly \$130,000 rise in debt service from the new wastewater treatment plant bond. The largest departmental increases are Administration (30.6%) due to added position and restructuring of the clerk position to meet the needs of the Town. Ambulance/Nursing Services (36.3%) for the two-provider model and new director, and Police (36%) for wage and overtime costs. Reductions include \$12,500 for Mount Heights Cemetery, \$2,928 for other CSO (Community Service Organizations) and a \$177,239 overall decrease in CIP appropriations.

Summary of Select Board discussions:

Admin: Ball introduces the topics of The Town Manager's proposed 5% increase and the proposed Clerk's title change. Ball expressed that it is not the right time to add an Assistant to the Town Manager. She noted that, based on the Northeast CPIU, both the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk should receive a 3.3% increase for cost of living. She is also concerned about adding a second Deputy Clerk position, stating that the new Monday-Thursday schedule has not been effective and the workload still needs to be addressed. Ball would like to eliminate the proposed Deputy Clerk position all together.

Board members review the Town Manager's proposed increase and agreed the contract should be revisited. Later, McFarland read the contract to clarify that the salary is tied to the Social Security COLA effective before January and noted that any changes would require mutual agreement.

Johnson said she would like to see an increased cost-of-living adjustment for the Town Manager. She emphasized the importance of adhering to the existing contract.

Johnson acknowledged that this is a difficult decision, whether contracted or otherwise. She emphasized the importance of consistency and aligning percentage increases with the CPIU. McFarland added that they try to keep increases in line with union contracts.

Burby noted that adding a second Deputy Clerk could help address the backlog of tasks and expressed support in having a second Deputy Clerk. Board members discussed that the Town Clerk position has expanded beyond traditional clerk duties and that additional support is needed.

Town manager Reddersen reported an increase in workload. Ball again expressed concern that an assistant may create a negative public perception. McFarland and Norwood agreed that adding a second position – part-time or full-time could help manage workloads and reduce backlog. Johnson expressed her appreciation and recognition of the position of the Clerk, and noted there are many different components, but she is also looking for a division of responsibility of that role and an assistant.

Board members discussed the advantages and challenges of hiring a part-time versus full-time deputy clerk, noting both the training demands and the difficulty of finding someone interested in part-time work. Based on office needs, Town Manager Reddersen recommended hiring a full-time deputy clerk. McFarland and Norwood agreed, stating that a full-time role would likely attract more qualified candidates.

Norwood motioned to have a 40-hour position for a second Deputy Clerk. Seconded by McFarland Vote: 3-2-0. Ball and Johnson Nay.

Members continued their discussion related to other Departments to reduce the proposed 5% cost of living down to 3.3%. Discussion related to the Finance Manager took place, Johnson noting that position had a rate increase mid-year.

CEO: Rate adjustment 3.3%

Boards & Committees: No changes

Contracted Services: Received information from Mr. Vallette and would like to request permission to have a little more time on that. Contracted Assessor 3.9% increase by contract. Town Manager Reddersen will continue to work with the Sustainability Committee relating to contracted services. Ask for better explanation for services.

Debt Services: none

Insurance: no changes or discussion

Municipal Buildings: Custodian 3.3% rate adjustment.

Community Service Organizations:

SWH/Tremont Ambulance Service ~ Ball noted that the common name of the SWH/Tremont Nursing Service should be reflected at the Town Meeting. She asked whether board members were comfortable with the ambulance service request. Chief Chisolm confirmed they were willing to support the service. Ball requested that Terresa Cousins evaluate potential cost savings through collaboration with the Southwest Harbor Fire Department.

Common Good~ Ball acknowledged their strong fundraising abilities and felt that reducing the request from \$3,000 to \$2,000 would be appropriate. Members agreed to this.

Mount Desert Nursing Association~ members agreed to fund the increased request at \$4,200 after noting the service is widely used.

Ball noted an asterisk should be added to note the new name of Aroostook County Action Program, which is replacing Downeast Community Partners. This is so residents understand they have taken over a service within our community.

Highway Department: The Board reviewed snow plowing for the school. Town Manager Reddersen provided an update stating that the School is under contract with their own vender, and the Town has agreed to cover the cost, though she is unsure whether the contract follows the calendar year or fiscal year. McFarland raised concerns about the quality of plowing and reports that the department may be plowing private properties instead of Town facilities. Johnson reported similar complaints regarding sidewalks and sanding and expressed concern about any personal use of Town equipment. She also reviewed the tree maintenance cost, noting that this year's increase was due to tree removals, and that the Conservation Commission is developing a policy to guide this work. The board reduced the tree maintenance line to \$2,500 and lowered safety supplies to \$2,000.

Police Department –members briefly discussed the current contract with Chief Hall, and his increase of 12%.

Positions within the Police Department~ Chief Hall reported that an officer recently submitted a resignation. That officer has since been hired by another agency, and the Town expects to recover \$39,000 from that department. The Sergeant's position is currently vacant. McFarland noted a significant increase to the overtime payout cost of the officers. Finance Manager Gatcomb provided an overview of the cost of overtime.

Because of the recently signed contract, officers are now scheduled for 48 hours each week with the current twenty-four-hour shift structure. The additional eight hours were not factored into the original overtime calculations resulting in higher-than-anticipated overtime costs. Members discussed whether the contract could be reopened, noting that doing so would require agreement from both parties. Chief hall explained that many officers prefer working in Southwest Harbor specifically because of the current schedule structure. Finance Manager Gatcomb presented budget projections reflecting the removal of one officer position.

McFarland stated that he would be in favor of eliminating the position, and noting the department is already short of two officers, and that removing one position would not require letting anyone go. Johnson asked for Chief Hall's opinion, Chief Hall noted that was not something they wanted to do but understood if that cut needed to happen. McFarland added this was a "huge oversight within the Union Contract." And added if they wanted to reopen the budget they could explore how to keep that position. Ball would like to investigate more.

Parking Officer/ Part time Dispatch Officer: showing 14.4% was to bring them to be paid as much as a fulltime dispatcher. No action taken.

Norwood motioned to reduce the budget by removing the police officer, Seconded by McFarland
Vote: 5-0-.0

Dispatch: A proposal is being developed for social media archiving, with estimated cost \$100 and \$200 per month. Finance Manager Gatcomb has updated the budget to reflect this. Chief Hall also noted that Power DMS does not provide services to the Fire Department, so there is no additional cost associated with computer licensing for Police and Fire.

Fire Department:

Contracted Services: reduce from \$4,000 to \$2,500.

Salaries reduce to 3.3% cost of living

Members noted that Chief Chisholm's salary had been proposed to make him comparable to other Fire Chiefs within the area.

Harbor Department: Select Board members discussed the initial proposal of an increase to the Harbormaster & Deputy Harbormaster and reduced it back down to 3.3% increase. Norwood reminded members there had been a previous discussion with an increase to the Deputy Harbormaster. Norwood would like to see this happen.

Town Manager Reddersen reported the Harbormaster had previously submitted a salary survey in support of the requested increase. The proposal was to keep the salary structure consistent with the earlier discussion of a \$2.50 increase plus 5%. McFarland recommended \$37.50 an hour, which would reach approximately \$78,000 annually. The Board ultimately agreed on an increase of \$2.50 plus a 3.3% adjustment for both the Harbormaster and Deputy Harbormaster positions.

School Budget: No changes made.

Select Board members discussed the CIPs for all departments. Several changes were made to reduce the budget.

Norwood motioned to advance budget to the warrant committee as discussed. Seconded by
Burby 5-0-0.

**B. TOWN OF SOUTHWEST HARBOR FEE SCHEDULE: Request of the
Town Manager to present and adopt updated permitting fee schedule.**

Johnson motioned to approve the Town of SWH Harbor Fee Schedule. Seconded by Ball.
Vote: 5-0-0.

**C. REVIEW OF THE LOBSTER BUYER TRUCK APPLICATION: Request of
Nick Madiera from the Harbor Committee for review and approval of the up-
dated Lobster Buyer Truck application.**

Johnson motioned to approve the Lobster Buyer Truck Application as presented. Se-
conded by Ball. Vote: 5-0-0

D. REVIEW OF THE CONDUCT POLICY: *Request of the Town Manager to present and adopt the updated conduct policy.*

Norwood motioned to approve the Code of Conduct Policy as presented. Seconded by Johnson Vote: 5-0-0.

E. REVIEW OF DRAFT REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY: *Request of Town Manager to present the initial draft of the remote participation policy.*

Norwood motioned to approve the remote participation policy. Seconded by Johnson.

Norwood later withdrew his motion after discussion of members wanting additional time to review before a vote. Members agreed to postpone the vote until the next meeting.

F. DISCUSSION OF STATUTORY CHANGE TO RECORDING AND DISCHARGE FEES: *Request of Town Clerk to discuss statutory change that results in an increase to the recording fee associated with tax lien discharges, effective January 1, 2026.*

Johnson motioned to change the recording fee on all discharges effective January 27, 2026. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 5-0-0.

G. MDI HOUSING BLOCK GRANT ACCEPTANCE: *Request of the Town Manager to accept the MDI Housing Block Grant.*

Johnson motioned to accept the tentative 2025 CDBG Housing Assistance Grant award for fire safety upgrades to The Ridge Apartment Complex and invitation to complete the project development phase, and to direct the Town Manager to sign related documents for this phase of the application process. Seconded by Ball Vote: 5-0-0.

H. REVIEW OF CONTRACT WITH RJD APRAISAL: *Request of the Town Manager to discuss contract with RJD Appraisal.*

Norwood motioned to direct the Town Manager to explore cancellation of the existing contract with RJD and enter a new contract with Caldwell Municipal Assessing and Consulting LLC. Seconded by Ball. Vote: 5-0-0.

I. DISCUSSION OF SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION: *Request of the Town Clerk to discuss the upcoming Special Town Meeting in March 2026.*

Special Election Schedule:

- First Public Hearing February 10th
- Newsletter will be sent out by the Town Manager with information about the second public hearing
- Second Public Hearing March 10th

Members decided that having a meeting on March 23rd was not necessary and would hold a Special Secret Ballot Election on Tuesday March 24th.

7. **LIAISON REPORT:** Nothing to report.

8. **MANAGER REPORT:** No formal report drafted.

Resiliency Program will meet again at the Library this Thursday evening 1.27.2026. It has been posted. The community and committee members are encouraged to attend.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

10. **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:** *No action will be taken, other than to place the requested items on the next agenda.*

- 80 K status
- Remote participation policy
- Look into biweekly pay for discussion
- Employee self-services – digital options
- Public Hearings
- Shoreland Zone Change requested.

11. **NEXT MEETING DATE:** *Adoption of a motion to confirm the date of the next regular meeting for Tuesday, February 10th at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Office meeting room.*

Ball motioned to confirm the next regular meeting for Tuesday February 10th in the Town Office meeting room. Seconded by Johnson. Vote: 5-0-0.

12. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Johnson motioned to adjourn at 8:59 p.m. Seconded by Burby. Vote: 5-0-0.


Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer E. LaHaye
Town Clerk

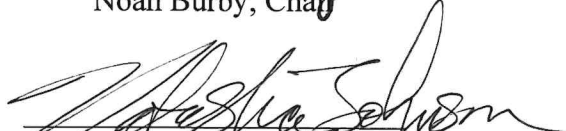
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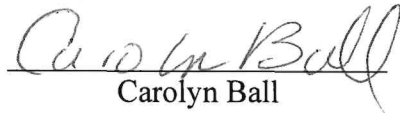
Noah Burby, Chair



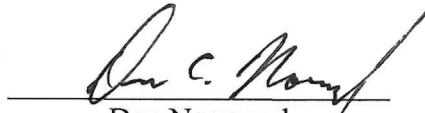
Chapin McFarland, Vice Chair



Natasha Johnson



Carolyn Ball



Dan Norwood