



SELECT BOARD MEETING
Town of Southwest Harbor
Town Office & Via Zoom*
6:00 p.m. ~ Tuesday, October 14, 2025

Minutes

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Burby called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.
2. **ROLL CALL:** Vice Chair Chapin McFarland, Natasha Johnson, Carolyn Ball, Dan Norwood, Town Manager Karen Reddersen, and Town Clerk Jennifer LaHaye present.
 - A. **Excused Absences** (*if any*) Chair Noah Burby is sick.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** *Request of the Town Manager for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.*

Johnson motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 5-0-0.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** *Request of the Town Manager for a motion "to approve the minutes of...."*

- A. Executive Session-September 23, 2025

Johnson motioned to approve the executive session minutes for September 23, 2025. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-0.

- B. September 23, 2025

Johnson motioned to approve the minutes for September 23, 2025. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-0.

5. **APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:**

Town Payables: W# 38
Trust & Agency: W# 30, 33 34,37
School Payables: W#32,35

Town Payroll: W# 09925, 1002, 1009,1016
Conservation: W#1014-1, 1014-2
School Payroll: W# 31,36

Johnson motioned to approve the warrants as presented. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-0.

PUBLIC HEARING:

- A. Liquor License Renewal – Peter Trout, LLC:** *Request of Peter Trout, LLC on behalf of Peter Trout's Tavern and Inn, 48 Shore Rd., SWH for an On-Premises Beer, Wine, and Spirits liquor license renewal*

Johnson motioned to recommend approval of the application of Peter Trout, LLC on behalf of Peter Trout's Tavern and Inn, 48 Shore Rd., SWH, for an On-Premises Beer, Wine, and Spirits liquor license. Seconded by Ball. Vote: 4-0-0.

~Town Clerk LaHaye reported that currently there are no concerns at this time for the request. The owner is currently working with the Harbormaster regarding parking and providing payment.

6. APPOINTMENTS:

- A. SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE:** *Request of the Town Clerk to appoint Leslie Heilakka to the Sustainability Committee.*

Jonston motioned to appoint Leslie Heilakka to the Sustainability Committee for a term effective until June 30, 2026. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-0.

- B. HARBOR COMMITTEE:** *Request of the Town Clerk to appoint Ryan Donahue to the Harbor Committee.*

Johnson motioned to appoint Ryan Donahue to the Harbor Committee for the remainder of a three-year term effective until June 30, 2028. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-0.

7. REGULAR BUSINESS:

- A. Presentation by Sustainability Committee-Housing Working Group:** *Request of the Town Manager to have the Sustainability Committee to provide an interim report of the working group on housing*

Chair of the Sustainability Committee was present in person at this meeting. She introduced Mary Ellen Martel and Emily Samuel who update this evening. Martel reported they worked based on the needs identified in the 2023 updated comprehensive plan. They have found that year-round rentals, that MDI median income working households can afford are in short supply. Over past seven months, the group has been inventorying dwellings and real estate sales within Southwest Harbor to have an accurate picture of the balances between year-round and seasonal dwellings. They have inventoried about 87% of the dwelling units within Southwest Harbor, which has over 1,300 dwellings. Their goal is to provide the Select Board with data that can be used in future policy discussions. Martel reports in the last five years, year-round dwellings have gone down in Southwest Harbor from 56% to 52%. There are concerns that the children who grew up in Southwest Harbor and are now adults cannot afford to live here.

Emily Samuel noted that data from 50 years ago shows that two-thirds of the families that lived within the Clark Point Road, Dirigo Road and High Road triangle were living and working here in town. Samuel states the data indicates that at that time, wages and housing were in sync. If

you lived in town, you could work in town, and vice versa. Samuel states that if you look at the data, the current median sale price for a dwelling in Southwest Harbor is \$550,000.00. She went on to explain that a family would need an annual income of \$192,000.00 to afford that. The median household income in Southwest Harbor is currently only \$62,000. So that means that our median-priced homes cost more than three times as much as our median income families can afford. In closing Samuel noted the working group is requesting permission from the select board to allow them to engage with the members of the community on this topic.

Johnson reviewed the interim report and highlighted concerns about the balance between employment opportunities and affordable housing. She observed a “troubling trend of vacant storefronts and declining commercial activity, raising the questions: Do we need more jobs in town, or more housing? Which should come first?” Johnson also noted many aspects of the community have changed over generations. She suggested the upcoming resiliency workshop could serve as a valuable venue for gathering feedback.

Ball noted that homeowners who rent out their properties, or partial properties, often use rental income to offset mortgages costs, making it more affordable than for families who do not have that supplemental income to do so. She questioned whether property assessments are assessed differently based on commercial use and residential use. Town Manager Reddersen explained that assessments consider factors such as the property size, whether it is used for short-term rental income or a primary residence. Ball provided an example of whether a hair salon in your home would be assessed differently. Ball felt this should be investigated further.

The report presenters are referencing is included in this packet and available at the Town Office.

B. Presentation by the Police Chief-Police Department: *Request of the Town Manager to have the Police Chief provide an overview of the Police Department*

Chief Hall reviewed statistics of 2024-2025 October 1st 2024-October 1, 2025.

Dispatch call volume: 2164

Police: 1268

EMS: 481

Fire: 415

70 car crashes, 21 arrests and 2 dog bite calls

Chief Hall spoke with Chief Chisholm about the difference between his numbers and what was being presented tonight. He noted a lot of that has to do with some of their calls and they are self-generated, and do not necessarily go through dispatch for that. Chief Hall wanted to provide a reason why the numbers may vary from Chief Chisholm’s presentation.

Chief Hall explained that the FBI is supposed to audit the Department’s criminal records management process every three years, as required by federal regulations. The last audit was in 2019. Chief Hall explained that the audit consists of two sections, one focused on security, and another on officer and dispatcher training for accessing information. Chief Hall has learned the Department needs to implement security upgrades to be in compliance; he is actively working with IT services to be in compliance.

Chief Hall presented a SWOT analysis of the Police Department.

Strengths: The Department is fully staffed providing strong coverage to both towns. Two officers are partially active within the community. Morale has significantly increased over the years and staff members enjoy working together.

Weakness: The Department needs to find a way to hire part-time administrative assistant and improve the current space. He said he will be looking at a couple different ideas to present at a future date.

Opportunities: Chief Hall noted that the department recently assisted with a Triumph Motorcycles TV commercial, presenting a unique opportunity for the department. Additional opportunities include a wellness and medical program that will allow for all first responders on the Island to get screened. Bar Harbor Police Chief Kearns made this possible with a grant request. Chief Hall is also exploring specialized roles for officers such as drone operator for search and rescue and establishing a formal School Resource Officer (SRO) program in partnership with local schools.

Pressing Threats: Chief Hall noted all departments are preparing their officers to be alert and vigilant with the increase potential for political violence. He noted the law enforcement's role in these types of situations is to protect the First Amendment right to assemble. Chief Hall noted there would be a peaceful protest in Southwest Harbor this weekend. The town could expect between 500-1,000 attendees. Chief Hall appreciated the group reaching out to him in advance.

Select Board members explored how the schedules are working out for the officers. Chief Hall reported that most everyone was happy. He noted there is one officer that was not on the 24-hour schedule but wants to go on it, and they have another officer that is currently on the 24-hour schedule that rather not be on that schedule. The hope is to swap them. Chief Hall was asked how the working relationships with the other local police departments and local fire departments is going. He reports he recently had a good conversation with Chief Chisholm about using Power DSM program and assisting him with that. Chief Hall believes he has a good working relationship with both Mount Desert and Bar Harbor Departments and has recently been working closely with them for a joint training opportunity.

C. Transfer Treasures Swap Shop: *Request of the Town Manager to approve distribution of donation funds from Transfer Treasures Swap Shop*

Jill Freundlich, volunteer manager of the Transfer Treasures Swap Shop, has provided donated funds received from the recycling tent at the Southwest Harbor to the Town Office. These funds have been deposited into the respective reserve account. She has requested that the sum of \$100 be distributed to each of the following non-profit organizations, for a total distribution of \$600.00: SWH/Tremont Ambulance, SWH Public Library, Common Good Soup Kitchen, Westside Food Pantry, Harbor House Heating Oil Fund, and the Harbor House Weekend Backpack Fund.

Johnson motioned to authorize the town manager to distribute \$100 each to SWH/Tremont Ambulance, SWH Public Library, Common Good Soup Kitchen, Westside Food Pantry, and the Harbor House Heating Oil Fund and to provide an IGA gift card in the amount of \$100 to Harbor House for the Harbor House Weekend Backpack Fund. Seconded by Ball. Vote; 5-0-0.

8. LIAISON REPORT:

- Harbor Committee – reviewed the lobster buyer truck application. They hope to have the application submitted for the next meeting.
- Planning Board meeting – Ball attended the Planning Board’s public hearing, where the Citizen Initiative and LUO were discussed extensively. She raised concern about the way the meeting was conducted. She noted some members had concerns for the language, the extent of the testing, who is authorized to do the testing etc. Others felt the proposal was a positive step forward improving public safety and aligning it with state standards. One member did recuse themselves from the discussion.

9. MANAGER REPORT: See attached report

10. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

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

- Ambulance update
- Highway Department presentation
- Harbormaster presentation

12. NEXT MEETING DATE: *Adoption of a motion to confirm the date of the next regular meeting for Tuesday, October 28th at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Office meeting room.*

Johnosn motioned for the next regular meeting to be Tuesday October 28 at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Office meeting room. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 5-0-0.

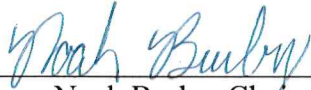
13. ADJOURNMENT:

Johnson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:52. Seconded by Norwood. Vote: 4-0-0.

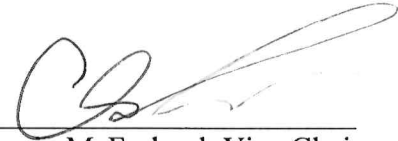
Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer E. LaHaye
Town Clerk


APPROVED



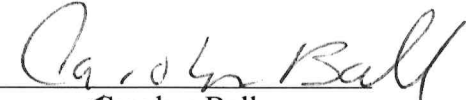
Noah Burby, Chair



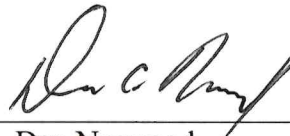
Chapin McFarland, Vice Chair



Natasha Johnson



Carolyn Ball,



Dan Norwood