

## TOWN OF MARLBORO, VERMONT SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES October 8, 2026

|                             |                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>Meeting</b>              | Marlboro Select Board – Regular Meeting                                                                                                        |
| <b>Date / Time</b>          | Thursday, October 8, 2026, 6:00 PM                                                                                                             |
| <b>Location</b>             | Marlboro Community Center and via Zoom                                                                                                         |
| <b>Select Board Present</b> | Molly Welch (Chair), Jeff Skramstad (Vice Chair), Kate Kirkwood (part of meeting, via Zoom and in person)                                      |
| <b>Staff Present</b>        | Nick Morgan (Town Administrator), Andrew Richardson (Road Supervisor), Rebecca Sevigny (Treasurer)                                             |
| <b>Others Present</b>       | Gail LaFond and Jessica Rivers (Acrisure, health plan administrators, via Zoom)                                                                |
| <b>Residents Present</b>    | Jim Giddings, Eric Sacks (via Zoom), Doug Sacks (via Zoom), Shea Witzberger, Petey Mitchell, Megan Littlehales, Cindy Glover, Malaileea Puffer |

### 1. Call to Order

Chair Molly Welch called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Board members signed the Code of Conduct; Kate Kirkwood will sign when available. There were no changes to the agenda.

#### **BEGIN ZOOM RECORDING**

*Audio of the meeting is available on the Town of Marlboro SoundCloud page.*

### 2. Extended Unscheduled Open Public Comment – Stark Road

Residents attended to discuss the Board's earlier decision regarding winter maintenance of the Marlboro section of Stark Road.

#### **2.1 Resident Comments**

- Jim Giddings, speaking on behalf of Stark Road residents, said the residents hope to reach an agreement without getting into legal disputes. He asked the Board to reconsider its decision and keep the plowing arrangement the same as last year, with the private plow contractor (Ethan) continuing to plow to the turnaround at the top of Stark Road, where the Marlboro plow turns around. He noted that many people besides the five households use the road.
- Chair Welch clarified that, per the minutes, the Board voted to designate the section of Stark Road from the Fox Road intersection to the Brattleboro town line as "no winter maintenance, limited summer maintenance." The Board did not reclassify the road from Class 3 to Class 4.
- Shea Witzberger (402 Stark Road) said the flatter Marlboro section must stay open for safety. Large vehicles, including power company trucks, ambulances, and fire trucks, cannot safely use the steep Brattleboro section and reach the homes from the Marlboro side. She cited concerns for elderly neighbors and neighbors with disabilities, and her own need to respond to work calls.
- A caretaker of the Sacks property noted that power lines go down often in winter and that residents need reliable access.

- A resident noted that the homeowners bought their properties when the road was regularly plowed, and raised concerns about effects on property values and homeowners insurance if emergency vehicles can only reach the homes by the steep Brattleboro section. Two of the affected property owners pay Marlboro property taxes.
- Cindy Glover (Fox Road) supported the residents' position, noting the road had been plowed for decades.
- Residents described the plowing history. Brattleboro has never maintained its upper section in winter, and neighbors have long paid for private plowing. The current contractor took over in 2018 and began plowing all the way through to the top of Stark Road about three years ago. Residents reported paying about \$3,000 last season and about \$2,250 the season before. They do not have a formal cost-sharing agreement. Chair Welch encouraged them to work one out, as other private road associations have done.
- Eric Sacks (via Zoom) said the Marlboro section of Stark Road is a Class 3 road, while the upper Brattleboro section is Class 4, which is why it is privately plowed, so the two sections are not comparable. He stated that under Title 19, decisions about winter maintenance on Class 3 roads are based on safety, and that safety has never been an issue on the Marlboro section in his 60 years there. He has sent a three-page written response to the Select Board, and a hard copy was given to the Board at the meeting.

## 2.2 Road Supervisor Comments

- Andrew Richardson said that, according to VTrans District 1 representative Patrick Wilson and the VTrans "Orange Book," a select board may limit maintenance on any town road.
- In his opinion, Stark Road does not come close to meeting Class 3 standards. He believes it was likely classified as Class 3 when town roads were measured to maximize state aid. Keeping it Class 3 preserves state funding, which is not available for Class 4 roads.
- He has been in contact with the Brattleboro Department of Public Works and Brattleboro's assistant fire chief, who said he would look into what Brattleboro can do and has not yet responded.
- The private contractor quoted about \$175 extra per storm to plow through to Fox Road. Using \$200 per storm and about 25 storms per season (based on the contractor's invoices for plowing the Town Office), the added cost would be about \$5,000 per winter, or roughly \$1,000 to \$1,250 per household.
- Town road maintenance costs about \$18,422.37 per mile per year, and the five-person highway crew maintains 54.62 miles of road. The Stark Road section is about 0.5 to 0.6 miles, and plowing often requires several passes per storm. The turnaround is very difficult. Town trucks have become stuck there several times, and one required a tow costing about \$3,000.
- The road is a low priority for repairs given other needs, such as culverts on higher-priority roads.
- The highway crew widened a narrow section of the road by 2 to 4 feet so the contractor's 13-foot plow can pass through.
- He asked why Brattleboro does not include Marlboro Fire on its run card for these homes if its own emergency vehicles cannot reach them from below.

## 2.3 Further Comments

- Mr. Sacks thanked Mr. Richardson for his review. He noted that the Orange Book is guidance with no legal standing, but that it states the State may downgrade a Class 3 road that is not maintained for all-season travel to Class 4 and remove state aid. Mr. Richardson agreed but said this is rarely done.
- A resident asked how residents who do not use Front Porch Forum or Facebook can learn about decisions like this. Chair Welch said minutes are posted at the Town Office and on the website, and that the Board is considering a short summary of decisions made at each meeting. The resident suggested notifying affected neighbors, as is done for development review permits.

Chair Welch thanked the residents and said the Board will continue to consider the matter, take the new information into account, and look for creative solutions to address their safety concerns.

## 3. Administrative Items

### 3.1 Approval of Minutes

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the September 24, 2026 regular meeting. Moved and seconded. **Passed.**

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the September 26, 2026 informational meeting. Moved and seconded. **Passed.**

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the September 26, 2026 public hearing on the Subdivision Regulations. Moved and seconded. **Passed.**

### 3.2 Pay Orders

Pay orders were signed by all Board members except Kate Kirkwood, who will sign when available.

## 4. Planning Commission and Committees

### 4.1 Guidance for Boards and Committees

Nick Morgan presented a written summary of expectations for Town boards and committees, including preparing a budget, meeting with the Select Board twice a year, reporting their membership and terms in March, getting Select Board approval before contacting the Town attorney, and not hiring outside contractors. Board members noted that an earlier draft covers similar points. Nick Morgan and Chair Welch will compare the versions and bring a combined document back to the Board.

### 4.2 Marlboro Mixer Article

Nick Morgan submitted the Select Board's Marlboro Mixer article by the deadline and sent it to Board members. Changes can still be made through the next day.

### 4.3 Subdivision Regulations Corrections

- While reviewing subdivision procedures, Chair Welch and Mike McConnell of the Windham Regional Commission found five or six errors in the proposed Subdivision Regulations. Chair Welch has marked up corrections, and Mr. McConnell will send his own. The corrections will be compiled and sent to the Planning Commission.

- The Board will not hold the Planning Commission to the original October 12 target date. The Planning Commission meets October 13 and may hold an additional meeting if needed.
- Next steps: the Planning Commission reviews and accepts the corrections, the Select Board holds a final public hearing on the revised document, and the Board then adopts the regulations. The hearing can be held during one of the Board's upcoming Saturday informational meetings rather than at a separate meeting.

## 5. Recycling Center

- Andrew Richardson reported that the idea of moving the recycling center to the school property received strong pushback at the school building committee meeting and appears to be a firm no. He does not recommend pursuing it.
- He proposed instead the Town-owned site on Town Hill (the former dog pound). The highway crew could do the work as a spring project at an estimated cost of about \$15,000, or about \$18,000 if a contractor removes the trees. The existing building could stay. A 50-by-50-foot pad would fit two recycling containers, with about 50 feet of space for vehicles to pull off the road. The site does not appear to be a wetland (setbacks are 50 feet from Class 2 and 100 feet from Class 1 wetlands), but the Town will confirm whether a permit is needed.
- The Board discussed an alternative of keeping the recycling center at its current location but closing it while the highway crew is working, with signs and a cable or chain, and keeping it open evenings and weekends. Residents who use it during closed hours or let children climb on equipment would receive letters and could be fined. Existing cameras would remain in use, avoiding the cost of a new camera system.
- Closing the recycling center entirely was mentioned but not favored, given the convenience for residents and the Town's aging population.
- The Board noted that PACIF's recommendation set a target of either November or February, not a firm deadline. The Board agreed to present PACIF with a plan and ask for its feedback before proceeding.
- A letter will be sent to a resident who has been warned three times about misuse of the recycling center, stating that further violations will result in a fine.

No motion was made. By consensus, the Board will start by closing the recycling center during highway crew working hours. Andrew Richardson will gather information, and the Town will consult PACIF. The item will be on the October 22 agenda. Nick Morgan will let the school representatives know that the Board has found another solution.

## 6. Road Standards

- Nick Morgan reported that Town attorney Bob Fisher confirmed the Road Standards can be released as standards rather than an ordinance. The Town would not be able to impose fines under standards, but they give the Road Supervisor flexibility for individual situations. Since private roads were removed, there is little to enforce.
- Nick Morgan will prepare a public notice, send it to Mr. Fisher for review, and then post the standards.
- The Board noted that the Town has an existing adopted road ordinance. Nick Morgan will find out what is required to repeal or replace it.

## 7. Job Search Update

[Brief update on the current job searches – details to be confirmed.]

## 8. Health Insurance Renewal – Acrisure

Gail LaFond of Acrisure presented the 2027 health plan renewal and introduced Jessica Rivers, who has replaced Ashley as the Town's account contact. Materials were sent in advance to Nick Morgan and Treasurer Rebecca Sevigny.

- Two years ago, the Town moved from a fully insured Blue Cross Blue Shield Platinum plan through Vermont Health Connect to a level-funded, high-deductible Blue Cross Blue Shield plan paired with a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA). The change kept employees whole while lowering premiums.
- Renewing the current plan for January 1, 2027 carries a 16% increase. A \$14,524 claims surplus is being returned to the Town, which brings the net increase to about 9%. The surplus is expected by late October or early November once the settlement acknowledgment is signed (one signature required). There may be additional savings once Blue Cross completes its aggregate stop-loss analysis.
- Alternatives presented: a comparable Blue Cross gold high-deductible plan through Vermont Health Connect (about 8%, with higher deductibles), and an MVP gold plan with an HRA (about 4%). Staying on the former Platinum plan would have cost about 30% more than the current plan. Projections assume 60% HRA usage, compared with 54% in 2025 and 50% so far in 2026.
- Ms. LaFond recommended staying with the existing plan to avoid disruption. Switching to Blue Cross through Vermont Health Connect would save little, and MVP is the only option with meaningful savings but could mean employees lose access to their current doctors. Nick Morgan and Rebecca Sevigny also recommended staying with the current plan.
- A retiree leaving the plan in January will not affect 2027 rates but could affect 2028 rates. Future rates will reflect normal underwriting of claims experience, and medical cost trend in Vermont runs about 9% to 10%.
- Acrisure will send the documents needed for the surplus return and renewal, plan documents for open enrollment, and information for the annual PCORI filing due in July.

**MOTION:** To continue with the Blue Cross Blue Shield BlueEdge Business plan for 2027 with the same plan design, a net increase of about 9% after applying the surplus refund. Moved and seconded. **Passed.**

## 9. Town Administrator Updates

- Emergency Shelter: Nick Morgan introduced the idea of an emergency shelter to the school building committee, which was receptive. He is arranging a walkthrough to evaluate whether it is feasible and what it would cost.
- Municipal Planning Grant: Nick Morgan is working on the grant application with help from Mike McConnell of the Windham Regional Commission, at no additional cost. He is waiting for Mr. McConnell's quote for the zoning bylaw revision. A cost over \$25,000 would require a formal RFP.

## 10. Road Crew Courtesy and Complaint Process

Chair Welch reported that residents have been rude to the highway crew and have stopped crew members for long periods to complain, which interferes with their work. She has drafted a public statement and proposed cards the crew can hand out directing complaints to the Select Board. She also found a complaint form from another Vermont town that could be used both by residents with concerns about Town staff and by staff reporting problems with residents. The draft will be finalized and shared with the Board.

## 11. Executive Session

No executive session was held. The Board agreed that the Stark Road matter should be discussed in open session.

## 12. Board Discussion – Stark Road

- Board members appreciated Andrew Richardson's thorough and thoughtful presentation.
- Board members questioned why emergency vehicles would use the steep Brattleboro section in winter rather than Ames Hill Road, and noted that other Marlboro roads (such as sections near Ames Hill) are already closed in winter because they are dangerous. It was stated that no one lives on the Marlboro section of the road in winter.
- It was noted that upgrading a Class 4 road to Class 3 requires the road to be brought up to Class 3 standards, which is costly for property owners.

By consensus, the Board will keep its decision for now. The Board will review the matter further before the October 22 meeting and will wait for Brattleboro Fire's response on emergency access before advising the residents.

## 13. Other Business

A Brattleboro resident asked to park about a dozen cars for most of a day on the field near the old muster ground on Ames Hill Road for an informal group walk across Brattleboro later this month. Nick Morgan will ask Town Clerk Forresst Holzapfel whether parking there is appropriate, since the field is hayed and kept in good condition for the fair, and will respond to the request.

## 14. Adjournment

**MOTION:** To adjourn the meeting. Moved and seconded. **Passed.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nick Morgan, Town Administrator