

MINUTES OF TOWN OF BERKLEY SELECTMEN'S MEETING OF 08/18/2025

SELECTMEN IN ATTENDANCE: Tabitha K. McCrohan, Clerk, Jennifer Vincent, Chair

TOPIC		ACTION
	Meeting Called to Order at 6:00PM in the Moltoza Pettey Hearing Room	
Appointments:	<p>Board to appoint Sandra Cameron to the position of Principal Assessor; start date of September 2, 2025; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>During the early portion of the meeting, the Berkley Board of Selectmen appointed Sandra Cameron to the position of Principal Assessor. Jennifer Vincent made the motion to move this appointment to the beginning of the agenda, which was seconded and approved unanimously. Sandra expressed her gratitude for the opportunity and stated she was looking forward to working with everyone in the assessor's office. Matthew Chabot welcomed her and confirmed her start date as Tuesday, September 2nd. The board then formally voted to approve the appointment.</p> <p>Board to appoint Ashleigh Haslam to the Fiscal Task Force; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Ms. McCrohan explains the need for more members to answer questions effectively. Board also discussed the need for two more members for the Fiscal Task Force.</p>	<p>Motion to appoint: TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to appoint: TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p>
Old Business:	<p>Board to review and potentially sign contract BOS 26-02 for Library Planning and Design services with LLB Architects, LLC;</p> <p>Following the initial appointments, the board turned to the contentious issue of the library planning and design services contract with LLB Architects. Jennifer Vincent explained that while the project was originally presented to voters as "no cost to the town" and fully reimbursed through grants, rising costs now require the town to spend taxpayer funds that were promised wouldn't be needed. She emphasized this was a discussion session, not a vote, and stressed her full support for a new library while expressing concern about breaking promises made to the community.</p> <p>Library Director Carol Buote made a passionate case for the new library, explaining that the current 1918 building serves a population that has grown from 1,000 to 6,800 residents. She detailed accessibility issues, noting that her husband cannot access the building, and described challenges for mothers with toddlers navigating narrow, steep stairs and cramped bathrooms. Ms. Buote reported impressive usage statistics: 20,000 physical items and 12,000 e-items checked out in 2024, plus over 200 events with 3,000 attendees. She questioned when would be the "right time" for a new library if not now. Margaret Clark, a longtime resident, echoed these concerns, sharing that three generations of her family use the library and expressing frustration that the project has been delayed since the 1990s when it failed by just three votes.</p> <p>Dean Larabee from the library building committee provided crucial financial context, explaining that to maximize the \$100,000 state grant, the town needs \$150,000 in local funding. With \$75,000 already raised through community efforts, the current proposal would require \$75,000 in town spending in contrast to what was initially described at Annual Town Meeting in 2024. He acknowledged the difficult timing given the town's financial pressures but warned that without moving forward, the project could be delayed until the middle of the next decade. Larabee also revealed the project timeline challenges, noting they're waitlisted for state funding and likely won't break ground until 2028-29, but emphasized that the current building is "held together with duct tape and love."</p> <p>Community member Mark Horsfall challenged the entire approach, arguing for a more comprehensive fundraising campaign and questioning the state building process, suggesting the town could build more cost-effectively by bypassing the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners entirely. He noted that state grants typically cover only about 35% of project costs, meaning a potential \$20 million project would require the town to fund \$13 million. Board members Tabitha McCrohan and Jennifer Vincent expressed deep concern</p>	

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	<p>about spending taxpayer money after promising they wouldn't, especially with other major financial decisions looming, including the MBTA Communities Law compliance vote that could affect the project's viability.</p> <p>After extensive discussion, the board voted to pursue negotiations with the second-ranked bidder for the architectural services, with automatic progression to the third bidder if the second doesn't meet their budget constraints of staying within the \$75,000 raised plus grant matching funds. Jennifer Vincent committed to recruiting more members for the Friends of the Library and expanding fundraising efforts, while acknowledging the October 1st deadline as the latest possible start date to meet the December 31st grant deliverable requirements.</p>	
Personnel:	<p>Board to accept the resignation of Amy Mursko as Assistant Librarian; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to accept the resignation of Erica Grady as Children's Librarian; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to accept the resignation of Rob Cote from the Fiscal Task Force, contingent upon submission of formal resignation; Review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to accept the resignation of Michael Avila from positions of full-time 911 Dispatcher and part-time Police Officer; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to review and potentially post position of Assistant Librarian, Technical Services, Grade 7 Step 1; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to review and potentially post position of Children's Librarian, Technical Services, Grade 8 Step 1, 25 hours per week review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to review and potentially post position of Regional Health Inspector; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to review the job posting and position description for the appointed Treasurer/Collector role, and to consider authorizing a contingent posting of the position, pending further legislative action by the Senate of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and formal approval by the Governor; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to review Administrative Assistant to the Conservation Commission grade increase proposal, to be funded through their revolving fund; This was recommended by the Chair of</p>	<p>Motion to accept; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to accept; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to accept; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to accept; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to post; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to post; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to post; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to post contingent upon further action; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to accept; TM moved; JV</p>

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	<p>Conservation Commission for compensation for work being done above and beyond the original job posting.</p> <p>The board reviewed and approved a rate increase proposal for the administrative assistant to the Conservation Commission. Matthew Chabot explained that the Conservation Commission chairman had approached them about increasing compensation for the position, noting that the individual was performing more work than originally outlined in the job posting. He mentioned there was a modified job description that positioned the role as a middle ground between administrative assistant and assistant conservation agent, reflecting the expanded responsibilities. The rate increase will be funded through the Conservation Commission's revolving fund, meaning no additional cost to the town's general budget. TM made the motion to approve the increase, which passed unanimously without discussion.</p>	<p>second; motion approved</p>
Appointments:	<p>Board to appoint Sergeant David Bernard and Officer Cameron Wentworth to the positions of Assistant Harbormaster.</p> <p>MC explained that without being formally appointed to this position the candidates cannot take the training and get credit for it. Further, there would be no additional financial outlay from the Town.</p>	<p>Motion to appoint; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p>
New Business:	<p>Board to review upcoming schedule for Board of Selectmen's meetings; after some discussion, board decided to come up with a more formal calendar schedule before voting.</p> <p>The board discussed establishing a regular meeting schedule, with Jennifer Vincent proposing they meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month for better community engagement and easier planning. Matthew Chabot agreed, noting they had traditionally followed a similar two-week cycle, though he acknowledged there would occasionally be scheduling challenges during five-week months. Vincent explained that consistent scheduling would help both board members and residents plan around the meetings, similar to practices on other boards she serves on. The board agreed that Vincent would draft a calendar of meeting dates for the next year, which they would review and approve before posting publicly, providing predictable meeting times while maintaining flexibility to add special meetings when necessary. JV agreed to take a look at a complete drafted schedule for the coming year before a formal motion at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Board to review correspondence regarding 52 Anthony Street property and consider the Town's prospective interest in acquiring a fee interest or an easement interest in said property, where the current owner is willing to gift the town an easement or portion of the property that abuts the ball fields on Anthony Street and connects to town-owned land at 60R Anthony.</p> <p>Tabitha McCrohan explained this small easement would connect two currently separated town properties, with one side featuring an Eastern Box Turtle habitat that currently has no access. The acquisition would allow the town to potentially build boardwalks through an area of protection for the Eastern Box Turtle and create future recreational connections between the properties. Matthew Chabot noted this could tie into the St. Ives project's original vision of walking trails and mentioned there's mutual interest from the property owner, with the possibility of bringing this to the November special town meeting for authorization if the paperwork can be completed in time. JV agreed to allow the TA to prepare a proposal with the Board and Town Floor holding ultimate approval of the potential easement.</p> <p>Board to discuss and determine opening and closing dates for the Special Town Meeting warrant. The board discussed scheduling a special town meeting for Saturday, November 15th, with the warrant opening September 10th and closing October 6th. They chose Saturday to increase community participation, particularly for important votes, though they debated timing due to conflicts with youth sports schedules that typically run until late</p>	<p>Information only, no votes taken</p> <p>Information only, no votes taken</p> <p>Information only, no votes taken</p>

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	<p>afternoon on Saturdays. The board considered various times, with suggestions ranging from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, weighing factors like daylight hours, sports conflicts, and the need to accommodate both older residents (who might prefer weekends) and younger families (who have Saturday sports commitments). Matthew Chabot also recommended changing the venue from the town gymnasium to Berkley Middle School due to recent town meetings being well-attended to the point of overflowing, noting the middle school offers better parking and overflow options with its cafetorium setup.</p> <p>Board to discuss and identify potential warrant article priorities for the upcoming Special Town Meeting and potential meeting dates/venues including discussion on Saturday meeting; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to discuss the Town's prospective fee or easement interest in the property at 2 Riverside Drive and consider potential future action; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>The board discussed the town's potential acquisition of properties at Two Riverside Drive and One Shore Road from a developer who no longer wishes to own them. Tabitha McCrohan explained that these properties, which include mostly wetlands and a small beach area, could be gifted to the town. She noted that acquiring these properties would provide the town with a location for their police boat, which is important since Berkeley is one of seventy-seven coastal communities responsible for policing both the Assonet and Taunton Rivers. McCrohan also mentioned the potential for future revenue generation through boat docking fees and described it as a valuable small investment that many residents already assumed the town owned, as people frequently walk the beach area. Similar to the other land ownership item, a completed proposal would come before the Board through the TA and Town Counsel.</p>	<p>Information only; no votes taken</p> <p>Information only; no votes taken</p>
Old Business:	Board to approve 2025 License Renewal for Nouria Retail Energy, Inc. d/b/a Amatos Express; review of matter; votes may be taken.	Motion to approve; TM moved; JV second; motion approved
Meeting Mail:	<p>Letter from Chief Railroad Officer of the MBTA, Ryan Coholan regarding Crossing Diagnostics JV provides an update on the crossing diagnostics, mentioning the collaboration with the state to fund the diagnostics at no cost to the town. Discussion on the next steps, including the potential creation of quiet zones and the associated costs.</p> <p>National Grid Notification regarding vegetation management along rights-of-way. Tabitha McCrohan explains the annual notification from National Grid regarding vegetation management along their utility rights-of-way.</p>	Information only; no votes taken
Meeting Minutes:	<p>Board to approve Meeting Minutes of July 30th, 2025; review of matter; votes may be taken</p> <p>Board to approve Executive Session Minutes of July 30th, 2025; review of matter; votes may be taken</p>	<p>Motion to approve; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p> <p>Motion to approve; TM moved; JV second; motion approved</p>
Town Administrator Report	Matthew Chabot provided an update on administrative funding from the Public Health Excellence Grant, explaining that the town receives an administrative fee for taking the lead role in this regional grant program. He announced plans to use portions of this administrative funding to refurbish the former Conference Room B and former treasurer's	Information only; no votes taken

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office as workspace for regional staff. Chabot addressed previous concerns about potential unemployment risks if the grant wasn't renewed by noting they would maintain a balance to mitigate such risks, while also exploring ways to use the administrative funding to offset some labor costs for town staff who help administer the grant. He praised the regional health program as an "all around benefit" and "home run" for a town with limited general fund resources for health services, highlighting upcoming events including vaccine and glucose reading clinics led by their public health nurse that wouldn't otherwise be available without the grant program.


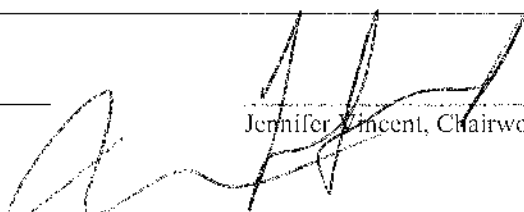

Public Input:

During public input, citizen Mark Horsfall raised a question about potentially transferring the soil bylaw oversight from the Board of Selectmen to the Conservation Commission, suggesting it would be a better fit given the technical nature of soil management issues. He noted there had been several issues the previous year on South Main Street and pointed out that while the board members are intelligent, not everyone has expertise in distinguishing between different soil types like sand, silt, and clay. Tabitha McCrohan responded that they hadn't discussed this transfer but agreed it would be preferable, noting they had previously talked about rewriting the current soil bylaw due to its vague language and loopholes. She explained that in practice, they often rely on engineers and the Conservation Commission for technical expertise anyway, since these matters frequently involve wetlands and filling issues. Horsfall emphasized that having "one path and one voice" on soil-related matters would be more effective, especially since soil issues often intersect with Conservation Commission jurisdiction over wetlands protection.

**Information only;
no votes taken****Executive
Session:**

Board to enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares; review of matter; votes may be taken.

Board moved to enter executive session at 7:35PM not to return to open session.


Tabitha K. McCrohan, Clerk
Jennifer Vincent, Chairwoman
Matthew Chabot, Town Administrator