

Town of Colrain
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting
Colrain Highway Garage
9 Jacksonville Road
4:30PM
MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD
March 10, 2026

Board Members Present: Emily Thurber (Chair), Ben Eastman, Katie Korby

Others Present: Mark Cappadona, Colonial Power Group; Denise Allard, Colonial Power Group; Diana Parsons, Town Administrator; David Greenberg; Mike (resident); Gail Sinistore; Elaine Stanley; Amy Herzig; Marjorie Smith, Administrative Assistant

Call to Order

Emily Thurber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. All three Select Board members were present, and the meeting was being recorded as a hybrid meeting.

Review of Municipal Aggregation Plan and Recent Changes; Update on Community Solar Opportunity; Mark Cappadona and Denise Allard, Colonial Power Group, Inc.

Mark Cappadona explained the implementation of a new DASI charge by ISO New England in March 2026, initially estimated to cost 0.001 cents per kilowatt-hour but has escalated to over \$1.1 billion. This shift requires an increase in the town's aggregation rate to 14.112 cents, resulting in a monthly rise of about \$7 for average users. The rate is marginally higher than Eversource's basic service rate, but increases in basic service rates are expected. The contract includes shared risk for DASI costs, accommodating further cost variations. Although notifications were sent in February, there are concerns about timely information dissemination compared to other towns. Residents maintain the option to opt out. A new low-income community solar initiative promises a 2-cent rate reduction for eligible customers. There is also interest in exploring town-owned community solar projects for additional revenue opportunities.

Consent Items

Approve Meeting Minutes of 2/24 and 2/26

Warrant AP 2634 in the amount of \$36,243.01

Warrant AP 2635 in the amount of \$117,241.63

Warrant PR 2617 in the amount of \$33,880.24

Emily Thurber moved to approve the meeting minutes of the Select Board for 2/24 and 2/26 of 2026 as written. Ben Eastman seconded. Approved unanimously.

Emily Thurber moved to approve warrants AP 2634, 2635, and PR 2617 as presented. Katie Korby seconded. Approved unanimously.

Appointments and Resignations

None

New Business

Discuss Grant Application for Eco One Stop for Growth re: Town-Wide Master Planning

Diana Parsons highlighted the grant opportunity for economic development and planning assistance, which emerged from a recent meeting where about 15 groups expressed interest in town-wide planning. Emily Thurber emphasized common issues identified during the meeting, such as challenges with meeting venues, communication, and volunteer recruitment. She suggested applying for the grant before forming committees. David Greenberg noted the Planning Board's intention to spearhead this effort, which includes redrafting outreach letters to involved groups. Diana confirmed that the grant applications are due in April, with outcomes anticipated by late summer or early fall. The board plans to apply for the \$110,000 grant and maintain momentum through related planning initiatives like MVP and hazard mitigation.

Old Business

Address Environment and Climate One Stop Grant for Riverbank Stabilization Behind the Fire Station; Possible Next Steps

DEP has proposed mapping the old waste materials on-site for free, a necessary step for the stabilization project and any future site plans. Past reluctance to investigate was due to "don't ask, don't tell" concerns, but Diana Parsons believes DEP is already aware of the materials, some of which may have washed away. The board agreed to pursue DEP's offer for mapping, as knowing the boundaries of contamination is crucial. Clarification was needed on several related projects, with STANTech managing dam design through Natural River Damages grants and RCAP supplying federal aid to the fire and sewer districts.

Review and Approve Letter to Mr. Isles re: Mailbox Replacement

Diana Parsons drafted a letter declining to replace Mr. Isles's mailbox, pointing out that direct contact by the plow would have caused greater damage than what appeared to be due to snow impact, a common occurrence. Ben Eastman shared his experience of raising his mailbox to the maximum allowable height per USPS guidelines, a solution effective in preventing snow damage and favored by postal workers. Diana agreed to include recommendations for proper mailbox installation in the response, and the board decided no formal vote was necessary to send the letter.

Administrator Updates

Completed MCPPO Recertification Classes

Diana Parsons completed her Municipal Certified Public Purchasing Official recertification, taking 25 credits over three years. The virtual format made this accessible for small town administrators who previously couldn't attend Boston classes. She noted this preparation helped during the current audit process with procurement documentation.

Attended Workshop re: Targeted Universalism for MVP and Mass in Motion Grants

Diana attended a workshop on targeted universalism, which has replaced diversity, equity, and inclusion language in grant applications. The concept involves universal goals that benefit everyone while providing targeted help for those needing additional assistance to achieve the same outcomes.

Update re: Colrain Projects since July 1, 2024

Diana presented a comprehensive project tracking document showing completed projects (Jacksonville Road slope stabilization, Heath Rd culvert replacement, composting waste transfer station project) and ongoing awarded grants including small bridges, dam design, ADA planning, Green Communities designation, Mass in Motion, and MVP planning.

She outlined a multi-year plan with Nate Gilbert for Chapter 90 spending, coordinating with DOT on Adamsville Road projects and preparing for Mass Works applications. The Vincent Brook and Sanders Brook bridge projects are estimated at \$3 million each.

Mike emphasized the critical importance of updating the expired hazard mitigation plan, noting the town received over \$1 million from FEMA after Hurricane Irene but is now ineligible for federal disaster funds. Diana confirmed they applied for replacement funding through the Municipal and Tribal Technical Assistance Grant program after their original BRIC funding was pulled.

Mike also noted the server room door replacement authorized at Town Meeting 2024 remains incomplete, creating a cybersecurity vulnerability.

Public and Board Member Comments (votes will not be taken)

Update from Colrain Community Meeting, Saturday, 2/28

Emily summarized the community meeting findings, identifying common struggles across organizations: recruiting volunteers, fundraising, meeting spaces, communication challenges, and maintaining sustainable volunteer involvement. About 15 groups participated, missing only the baseball association, fire association, and snow drifters due to unclear contact information.

Update from Colrain Sewer District Presentation & Next Steps, 3/3

Diana shared an update from the sewer district indicating the Wright Pierce team will finalize preliminary engineering and environmental reports before month's end. The district is meeting with USDA representatives about securing federal funding and submitted FY26 rural development grant paperwork for predevelopment activities.

The board discussed the 5A system option costing approximately \$4.8 million for 24 households. Emily clarified that while the town owns collection system pipes, no Colrain tax dollars fund this project - only state and federal grant funds are involved.

Gail Sinistore questioned why the town is involved, expressing concern about using taxpayer money for a small number of people. Emily explained the town's role is limited to supporting constituents in finding solutions, with the sewer district paying costs through grants.

Council on Aging Discussion

Several COA members attended expressing frustration about the delayed bylaw approval process preventing new appointments. Amy Herzig noted the aging membership needs younger participants. The board explained they're waiting for Attorney General approval of the bylaw, expected by end of March, before making appointments.

Mike noted various procedural errors by previous officials that required re-doing multiple town actions at additional cost.

Other Topics

Diana mentioned a laptop lending program grant opportunity through MBI with a tight deadline of April 5th. Mike suggested applying for several laptops to support digital equity initiatives, noting the program requires demonstrating education, workforce development, and healthcare uses.

The board discussed COA budget and procurement concerns, noting their spending approaches procurement thresholds requiring formal quote processes.

Requests for Future Agenda Items

Joint Budget Meeting with Finance Committee, 3/12/26; Continued Budget Meetings, 3/24

The board confirmed the upcoming joint budget meeting with Finance Committee on Thursday, with continued budget discussions scheduled for March 24th.

Public Hearing to Opt-Out of Early Voting for Local Elections, 3/24/26 (To be Confirmed by Town Clerk)

Diana explained this optional public hearing would allow opting out of early voting for local elections. She's waiting for confirmation from Town Clerk Emma about whether she wants to pursue this option, noting the setup and staffing requirements.

COA Organization and Programming

The Board agreed to add to a future meeting agenda

Correspondence and Select Board Informational Items (votes will not be taken)

Announcement of FY27 Chapter 90 Funds to be Received, \$571,843.31

Diana announced the significantly increased Chapter 90 allocation of \$571,843.31, up from the usual \$300,000, due to new rural roads formula. She and Nate developed a multi-year spending plan coordinating with bridge grants and mass works applications.

Courtesy Notification from Franklin Land Trust re: 21st Annual D2R2 (Deerfield Dirt Road Randonnée), Saturday, August 22, 2026

The board noted this annual cycling event notification, recognizing the economic benefit to local businesses from the large number of participants.

MDAR Notice of Pesticide Spraying in Western MA along Eversource Right of Way

Diana included this notice for public awareness, noting some communities are sensitive to pesticide applications near their properties.

Mosaic Municipal Matching Grant for Regional Opioid Settlement Matching Grant Announcement from CPHS

Diana reported additional matching grant funds nearly doubling the regional opioid settlement collective funding. She noted minimal usage of harm reduction supplies currently available at town offices and library.

Dissolve Meeting

Emily Thurber moved to dissolve the meeting at 6:35pm. Ben Eastman seconded. Approved unanimously.

These draft minutes were created using ClerkMinutes, an AI-powered platform that transcribes meetings, identifies speakers, and generates professional minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

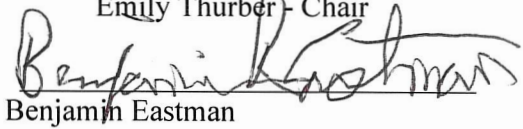


Marjorie Smith
Administrative Assistant

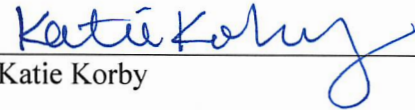
Accepted by the Select Board on 4/14/2026



Emily Thurber - Chair



Benjamin Eastman



Katie Korby

Documents Distributed to the Select Board Before the Meeting in a Packet or at the Meeting:

Colonial Power Group Presentation, Rate Increase Notification, Total Weekly DAAS Costs

Draft 2/24/2026 Select Board Minutes

Draft Colrain Comprehensive Plan Consultant Scope of Services dated 3/4/2026 prepared by FRCOG

Draft Letter to Mr. Isles dated 3/10/2026 re: Mailbox Damage

List of Projects from 7/2024

Email from Jessica Atwood, FRCOG, dated 3/6/2026 re: CSD Check-In Meeting and Next Steps

Greenfield Recorder Article dated 3/4/2026 re: \$3.55M System Proposed to Solve Wastewater Issues in Colrain

Long Term Solution Study prepared by Wright-Pierce Engineering dated 3/3/2026

Notes from 2/28/2026 Community Meeting

Letter from MA Governors Office to Diana Parsons, Town Administrator, dated 2/26/2026 re: Chapter 90 Funding for FY2027

Notification of D2R2 Bike Ride dated 2/25/2026

Notification from MDAR dated 2/24/2026 re: ROW Program

Email from Phoebe Walker, FRCOG, dated 2/27/2026 re: Regional Opioid Settlement Matching Grant

Letter from Ingeborg Waldsmith, MTRSD Treasurer, dated 2/26/2026 re: FY2027 Colrain Assessments