

Town of Colrain  
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting  
Colrain Highway Garage  
9 Jacksonville Road  
4:30PM  
**MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD**  
**March 24, 2026**

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

**Others Present:** Emma Coburn (Town Clerk - remote); Michael Slowinski (MLP Manager); Pat Geary, Krista Snyder, Matt Lovett (Colrain Sewer District); Elaine Stanley; Amy Herzig; Gail Sinistore; Joe Slowinski; Diana Parsons (Town Administrator); Marjorie Smith (Administrative Assistant)

### **Call to Order**

Chair Emily Thurber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. All three select board members were present, and the meeting was being recorded.

### **Public Hearing to Opt-Out of Early Voting for Local Elections**

Emma Coburn requested to opt out of early voting for the local election this year, citing budget concerns and limited demand. She explained that early voting extends election workers' hours and noted that absentee ballots are available for those who need them. Chair Thurber opened the public hearing for comments, and hearing none, closed the public hearing.

Emily Thurber moved to opt out of early voting for local elections. Katie Korby seconded. Approved unanimously.

### **Municipal Light Plant (MLP), Misc. Updates**

Michael Slowinski provided updates on pole transfer work, which has been completed on East Colrain Road and is ongoing on West Lydon Road and Eagles Hill for 2-3 weeks. The estimated cost is \$56,000 with reimbursement expected from Eversource. He praised Michael Cane, their Eversource liaison, for his instrumental help.

Mike reported collecting \$2,616.33 from home sales and delinquent accounts, and \$5,421.31 from accidents, totaling \$8,037.64 with zero write-offs this year. He discussed Vincent Brook bridge project easements and Sanders Brook Bridge funding possibilities.

Mike raised concerns about town meeting articles approval process and registrar appointments. Joe Slowinski questioned the town's role in the fire district dam project and criticized project management. Discussion became contentious regarding past town clerk performance and oversight issues.

Chair Thurber requested that future agenda items include specific topics for better preparation.

### **Consent Items**

#### **Approve Meeting Minutes**

**Warrant AP 2636 in the amount of \$613,354.44**

**Warrant AP 2637 in the amount of \$31,353.52**

**Warrant PR 2618 in the amount of \$32,179.39**

Emily Thurber moved to approve warrant AP 2636, AP 2637, and PR 2618 as presented. Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

## **Appointments and Resignations**

### **Nomination of Animal Inspector to MDAR – Ken Shearer**

Diana Parsons clarified this is a nomination to the state, not an appointment.

Emily Thurber moved to nominate Kenneth Shearer as animal inspector. Ben Eastman seconded.  
**Approved unanimously.**

## **New Business**

### **Letter to Legislators re: FY27 State Budget Priorities**

Diana Parsons explained that the Massachusetts Municipal Association requested towns send letters to legislators regarding state budget priorities, particularly requesting \$150 per pupil instead of the current \$75.

Emily Thurber moved to send a letter to legislators regarding FY 27 state budget priorities. Katie Korby seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

### **Review Select Board 2025 Annual Report for Publication**

Chair Thurber explained she had drafted bullet points but needed assistance with wordsmithing due to personal circumstances. She requested all board members sign the report together.

Emily Thurber moved to approve the Select Board Annual Report for publication as written. Katie Korby seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

## **Meeting with Colrain Sewer District (CSD) Commissioners re Request to Fund Collection System Improvements and Transfer to CSD; Sign off on Connections for Demolition of Barnhardt Building, Pat Geary, Commissioner**

Pat Geary requested to amend the agenda item to clarify that he did not request or authorize a specific time slot for discussion on the demolition of the Barnhardt building. Following this amendment, he presented three options for the sewer district's request: A) town applies for grants and funds collection system rehabilitation with CSD taking ownership; B) town pays lump sum with transfer to CSD; C) town retains ownership but allows CSD connection with operational agreements.

Joe Slowinski strongly criticized the project's economics and management, arguing it makes no financial sense and questioning why the Select Board previously supported grant applications. He emphasized the district has used the system for 30 years at \$45/month while typical septic systems cost \$25,000.

Extensive discussion ensued about project costs, engineering concerns, and taxpayer burden. Diana Parsons noted the need for legal consultation and clearer information about required improvements. Katie Korby requested Pat Geary provide more specifics about the aspects of the SSES study that the sewer district is seeking to address and the potential financial implications for the town. Ben Eastman asked Joe Slowinski to compile a list of his questions so the board could prepare responses and schedule a time for further discussion.

Emily Thurber moved to provide Town counsel with the SSES report and district's letter requesting assistance from the Town, then regroup afterwards. Ben Eastman seconded.  
**Approved unanimously.**

Diana Parsons also addressed a building demolition sign-off request from Barnhart, noting uncertainty about connections and recommending verification of building services.

## **New Business (cont'd)**

### **MA Association of Regional Schools re Testimony for Districts in Hold Harmless Status**

Chair Thurber explained the need for towns to advocate for short-term solutions as regional schools face budget pressures. The state needs to hear from towns picking up costs when other entities have already voiced concerns.

Emily Thurber moved to send a letter to local legislators requesting short-term solutions for districts in hold harmless status. Katie Korby seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Katie Korby agreed to attend the Friday meeting with Representative Ken Gordon regarding rural schools commission recommendations.

## **Old Business**

### **FY27 Budget Review**

Diana Parsons presented detailed budget reductions totaling \$82,000, analyzing seven years of spending data to identify areas for cuts without across-the-board percentage reductions. Key reductions included town office support, police vehicle maintenance, fire training, highway fuel, and Council on Aging appropriation.

She highlighted that education comprises 58% of the town's budget and discussed the unsustainability of current increases without overrides. The board scheduled additional meetings on April 14th and 21st for budget finalization, with department head meetings planned with Nick and Chris.

Discussion included creating a school stabilization fund and addressing the regional school's financial pressures. The Board expressed concern about the lack of communication from the school regarding feasibility study costs and timing.

### **Review FY27 ATM Draft Warrant Articles**

Diana Parsons reviewed draft warrant articles including prior year bills, stipends, technical school assessments, and various capital expenditures. She recommended paying down fire truck debt and continuing OPEB investments while building general stabilization funds.

### **Review April Schedule re: Town Meeting Preparation**

The Board scheduled an additional meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup> to accommodate budget discussions and warrant signing before the April 28th posting deadline for the May 6th town meeting.

## **Administrator Updates**

### **Eco One Stop Grants for Lower Reservoir Dam and Riverbank Stabilization Behind the Fire Station Submitted**

Diana Parsons reported that grants requested by the Connecticut River Conservancy have been submitted.

### **Status of Server Door; Updated Copier in Treasurer/Assessor Area**

Diana Parsons reported the server door is currently locked but needs upgrading. However, since the server will be removed by October, minimal investment is planned. She also noted a new copier was installed in the treasurer/assessor area, though she questioned the town's leasing practices for future equipment.

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

### **Select Board Office Hours**

Katie Korby postponed office hours until after town meeting due to scheduling conflicts.

**Update on ICS Overview**

Chair Thurber attended an Incident Command System overview class covering emergency management, NIMS protocols, and the town's comprehensive emergency management plan. She emphasized the importance of all board members receiving this training for federal funding eligibility and proper emergency response. The training covered debris documentation, reimbursement procedures, and communication protocols during disasters.

Discussion included reviewing the town's CEM plan and Continuity of Operations plan after town meeting, potentially incorporating this into the MVP 2.0 project with shared planning with other towns.

**Requests for Future Agenda Items**

**Joint Budget Meeting with Finance Committee**

The board confirmed a joint budget meeting on Thursday at 6 PM with finance committee members and Mohawk representatives John Chivers, Kate Barrows, Bill Lataille, and potentially Martha Thurber or Sheryl Stanton.

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

**Charlemont Hawley Enrollment Information**

Information was provided in packets showing enrollment data that may impact future financial obligations between districts.

**Massachusetts Select Board Association Western and Rural Massachusetts Conference**

The board noted the Saturday, May 2nd conference at the Delaney House, which Diana Parsons and Chair Thurber attended previously and found valuable.

**Dissolve Meeting**

Emily Thurber moved to dissolve tonight's meeting at 7:33pm. Ben Eastman seconded.  
**Approved unanimously.**

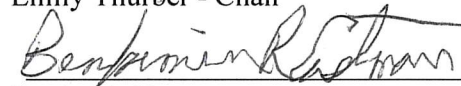
**These draft minutes were created using ClerkMinutes, an AI-powered platform that transcribes meetings, identifies speakers, and generates professional minutes.**

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:**

Memo dated 3/19/2026 from Emma Coburn, Town Clerk, re: Permission to Opt Out of Vote by Mail

Memo from Pat Geary, Colrain Sewer District, to the Select Board re: Three Options for the Ownership of the Collection System

Amendment to 3/24/2026 Select Board Agenda from Pat Geary

Nomination Form for the Inspector of Animals from MDAR

Email dated 3/20/2026 from MA Association of Regional Schools to Diana Parsons, Town Administrator re: School Funding Meeting Follow-Up

MA "Hold Harmless" School District Advocacy Packet

Letter to MA Legislators re: Request to Support Key Priorities for Cities and Towns in the FY27 Budget, Oppose Ending RMV Holds

Select Board 2025 Draft Annual Report

Draft FY2027 Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Charlemont and Hawley Enrollment Information Workbook from MTRSD

Memo dated 2/6/2025 from William Lataille, MTRSD, re: Assessment Calculation Error

Memo dated 3/12/2026 from William Lataille, MTRSD, re: Update to February 6, 2025 Assessment Calculation Error Information