



## **Select Board Meeting Minutes**

Special ('All Boards') Select Board Meeting

Saturday, April 11, 2026 – 9:00 AM

Andover Town Hall

### **Members Present**

Chair Dana Swenson; Vice Chair Les Fenton, Member Charlie Stewart, Member Mark Cowdrey, and Member James Delaney (arrived at 9:33 AM)

### **Also Present**

Staff - Town Administrator Sieburg

Public / Volunteers / Committee Members – Doug Phelps, Nancy Teach, Miranda Dwalga, Cheri Swenson, Roland Carter, Donna Duclos, Karen Healey (arrived at 9:34 AM)

### **Call to Order**

**Chair Dana Swenson** called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM.

### **General Discussion**

The Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting was to bring together town boards and committees to share information, identify current needs and vacancies, discuss planned activities and budget considerations for 2026, and improve communication and coordination between the Select Board and the various committees and commissions.

The Board noted it has been working on its own goals following Town Meeting and is planning a strategic planning session on May 15, 2026. Committee representatives were encouraged to think similarly about their goals and work plans for the coming year.

### **Cemetery Committee**

Cheri Swenson reported that the Cemetery Committee currently has three members and is at full membership. A prospective alternate was expected to attend an upcoming meeting to learn more about the committee's work.

The committee has used the same mowing contractor (Poulins) for the past four years and is satisfied with the work. Cheri asked whether the mowing contract must be put back out to bid or whether the Town may continue with the current contractor, potentially through a multi-year agreement. Direction from the Select Board will be needed.

### **Cemetery Committee (cont.)**

Planned 2026 activities include placement of veterans' flags on Saturday, May 16; a public panel discussion on natural/green burials on Tuesday, May 6 at 6:30 PM at The Hub; and another cemetery tour in coordination with the library and Historical Society.

The committee is researching the feasibility of a natural burial area in Andover. Discussion included site accessibility, winter burial challenges, possible need for assistance from the Highway Department and Fire Department, and the use of ground-thawing methods if such burials are eventually permitted.

The committee continues to review cemetery trust funds and is working with staff to better understand the balances, access procedures, and long-term options for simplifying or reducing the number of accounts.

Potential future capital needs discussed included fencing repairs or replacement, with the committee hoping to rely on trust funds rather than new tax-supported appropriations where possible.

Cheri also noted that the committee has decided to no longer allow the planting of bushes or trees within cemeteries due to maintenance, root, and plot-encroachment issues. Seasonal decorations remain a separate discussion.

### **Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Committee**

Doug Phelps reported that the CIP process followed a similar format to prior years and that the committee completed its report in time for use by the Select Board and Budget Committee during the budget process.

Doug stated that the committee's philosophy has generally been to identify possible funding approaches and timelines for capital projects rather than recommend whether particular projects should or should not proceed.

Discussion included the Cilleyville Bog Bridge and the difficulty of identifying a realistic funding path for rehabilitation or preservation. Doug expressed the view that the bridge is an important historic and visual asset to Andover and suggested that future public engagement, conceptual drawings, or fundraising may help move the conversation forward.

The Board and attendees also discussed the relationship between the CIP process and the Master Plan, with recognition that CIP planning should continue to be informed by the Master Plan as it is updated.

### **Fourth of July Committee**

Doug Phelps reported that last year's celebration was highly successful and well attended. He noted that Proctor Academy continues to be a major partner and provides significant support for the event.

The principal concern for 2026 is the increasing cost of fireworks. Doug reported that the current fireworks cost is approximately \$20,000, while the recent town appropriation was \$18,100. The committee has reserve funds, but continued annual shortfalls are not sustainable over time.

### **Fourth of July Committee (cont.)**

Board members discussed whether the committee should design the fireworks program around the amount already appropriated rather than continue requesting increased funding each year. Doug acknowledged the concern and stated he has no objection to directing the vendor to work within the available budget, even if that results in a smaller show.

The committee is also exploring fundraising alternatives, including donation cans at Carr Field and QR-code donations to capture support from visitors and nonresidents who attend the event.

Additional ideas discussed included expanding food offerings, possibly using more private food vendors, considering other fundraising or sponsorship approaches, and exploring event enhancements such as relocating display elements or adding attractions.

### **Historical Society**

Doug Phelps reported that work continues on the coach barn and that, with recently approved funding, siding and trim work is expected to be completed before the Potter Place Festival.

The Historical Society is planning a ribbon cutting for the coach barn during the Potter Place Festival, to be held on the last Saturday in June from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Doug expressed interest in coordinating transfer of the Concord Coach from the Town to the Historical Society on that date.

The group also continues work on painting and site improvements around Potter Place, including recent paving improvements and ongoing efforts to improve the appearance and safety of the area.

Doug reported that the Historical Society has officially taken possession of the All Souls Union Church property. Additional work remains, including addressing existing tax issues, building repairs, utilities, accessibility improvements, and long-term archive planning.

The Society hopes to use part of the church building for archival storage and preservation in the future, but substantial work remains before that can occur.

### **Planning Board**

Donna Duclos reported that the Planning Board is fully staffed with six members and one alternate, though additional alternates would be welcome.

The Planning Board's major goals for 2026 are to review and update the Town's land use ordinances, incorporate changes in state law where appropriate, and continue work on updating the Master Plan.

Donna stated that the goal is to have a draft Master Plan update ready for public hearing later in 2026, likely in the fall or early winter.

Donna also reported positively on the work of Land Use Office staff, noting improvements in organization, recordkeeping, and public responsiveness.

## **Planning Board (cont.)**

Discussion turned to the proposed land use fee schedule. Donna explained that staff had reviewed surrounding towns and worked to update the schedule without being unreasonable. She noted that an additional item may need to be added for cell tower-related building permit fees.

The Select Board asked that permit data be assembled as far back as possible, or at minimum for recent years, to show permit volume and help estimate what updated fees may generate in revenue.

There was also extended discussion about whether town projects should more consistently flow through the land use and planning process so that a complete local record exists for municipal projects, easements, and related activity.

Board members discussed the continuing absence of a formal building inspector and the need to work toward an inspection and sign-off system, including clearer contractor certifications and final documentation for certificates of occupancy. The Select Board indicated this should remain a priority to be developed in cooperation with the Planning Board and staff.

## **Conservation Commission**

Miranda Dwalga reported that the Conservation Commission currently has seven full members and six alternates. The Commission is not actively seeking new members at this time, but welcomes interested residents.

Work on the McDonough Trail had already begun on the day of the meeting, and a second trail work day is planned for May 2, 2026. The public is invited to participate.

The Commission continues to work with the Northern Rail Trail on placement of a bench that was purchased with prior-year funds.

Miranda reported that the Commission has made substantial progress on updates to the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), which will serve as an appendix and resource document supporting the Master Plan.

The Commission is also continuing collaboration with other local groups, including the library, Garden Club, and Cemetery Committee, where projects and interests overlap.

A beach sand replenishment project at Highland Lake is being explored, and the Commission will assist with the required permitting paperwork. The Commission is also coordinating with the Highland Lake Protective Association and hopes to host a representative from NH Lakes to discuss lake-related monitoring and lake host program.

The Commission remains satisfied overall with its current budget and continues to appreciate the separate support provided for the beaver deceivers. Recent coordination has also taken place regarding inspection and maintenance of those devices.

## Conservation Commission (cont.)

Discussion included the Town-owned property encroached on by neighbor, Randy Sirard. Miranda confirmed that the Commission continues to treat resolution of that issue as a priority and is working on a revised boundary concept for possible review by the Planning Board before further action is taken.

The Commission also remains interested in the long-term idea of a town forest. Miranda described the effort as still in an early stage focused on understanding options, identifying possible properties, and considering how such a resource might serve the community.

## Budget Committee

Donna Duclos provided a brief update on the Budget Committee. She noted that Mark Cowdrey will serve as the Select Board's ex officio representative.

Donna stated that there may be one open Budget Committee position and asked that the Town determine whether the Select Board may appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next election.

Discussion also included the idea of having the Budget Committee meet periodically outside the main budget season, potentially beginning with a summer meeting and eventually moving toward quarterly check-ins, to review financial status and better align expectations for future budgets.

## Additional Conversation

- Roland Carter spoke to the issue of town communication and asked what is being done to improve how residents receive information about meetings, projects, and community activities. Discussion included the Town website update, how the "Andover Hub" may be able to help, and the practical limitations involved in maintaining official social media or other communication tools. Other ideas discussed included an opt-in email notification system, periodic town hall sessions, better use of existing regional publications, and more consistent sharing of information by committees and organizations.
- Charlie Stewart suggested having committees appear before the Select Board on a rotating quarterly basis for short updates, rather than relying solely on an "all-boards meeting". The Select Board expressed support for that concept.
- Les Fenton advised attendees that the Select Board is also revising the code of conduct that will likely be distributed to committee members as part of the appointment or reappointment process.

## Adjournment

**Upon motion by Chair Swenson, seconded by Les Fenton,** the meeting adjourned at 10:44 AM.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
Don Sieburg  
Town Administrator

