

Town of Thetford Vermont

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Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes Thetford Town Offices (w/Virtual Attendance Option) Monday, February 23, 2026 7:00 PM

Selectboard Members Present: Sharon Harkay (chair), David Goodrich (vice chair), David Forbes, Li Shen, Steve Tofel (Zoom)

Others Present: Brian Story (Town Manager), Sarah Aspell (Town Moderator), Tracy Borst (Town Clerk/Treasurer on Zoom), Donna Ransmeier (Admin. Assistant on Zoom)

Public Present in Person and Via Zoom: Emma Cushman, Charlie Goldensher, Cynthia Shelton, Heinz Trebitz, Alan Guttmacher, Judy Harvey, Missy Krzal, George Leung, Roger Noble, Carole Petrillo, Ted Pogacar

Chair Harkay called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

1. **Agenda Review**
No changes were made.
2. **Notes from the Selectboard Chair**
Chair Harkay recognized the passing of longtime Thetford resident Don Fifield and noted his service to the Town including being a member of the Thetford Fire Department for 30 years with 20 of those years as the Fire Chief. He was also Thetford's first Emergency Management Director and was the recipient of Thetford's Civic Pride Award in 2014. The Board extended its condolences to his family and expressed appreciation for his service.
3. **Town Manager Report**
Trucks on Order for the Department of Public Works (DPW)
TM Story stated that there are two trucks that have been ordered but have yet to be delivered. The good news is that the extra time has allowed the Town to be in a position to pay for one of the trucks in cash so a loan won't be necessary.

Town Treasurer Obtains Additional Certification
Tracy Borst has earned her Advanced Treasurer certification. The Board congratulated her on this achievement.
4. **Committee and Commission Reports**
Energy Committee--David Forbes reported that Chair Nolan Riegler will be stepping down in August 2026 due to relocation. His departure will be a significant loss, and the Commission is preparing for this transition.
5. **Public Comment**
Cynthia Shelton updated the Board on planning for Thetford's 250 anniversary

celebration, noting strong community interest.

She also introduced a new initiative called "Storm Buddies", a volunteer-based neighborhood support system during emergencies. A planning meeting will be held soon.

She raised a concern about her difficulty reaching the emergency services phone and getting any response. TM Story said he would follow up with EMD Mariah Whitcomb.

6. Road Posting for Mud Season

The Board reviewed the annual posting of dirt roads for overweight vehicles during mud season (March 1-May 15).

Motion by Li Shen to approve the road posting for mud season.

No further discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Steve Tofel, in favor; Li Shen, in favor; David Goodrich, in favor; David Forbes, in favor; Sharon Harkay, in favor.

7. Review and Sign 2026 Road Mileage Certificate

Motion by David Goodrich to adopt the 2026 Certificate of Highway Mileage for year ending February 10, 2026.

No further discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Steve Tofel, in favor; Li Shen, in favor; David Goodrich, in favor; David Forbes, in favor; Sharon Harkay, in favor.

8. Adoption of the Service Agreement and MOU with the Thetford Volunteer Fire Department

Chair Harkay and TM Story noted that the TVFD agreed to the final two changes to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that we had asked them to consider. These clarified that should the TVFD dissolve, their town-funded assets would be donated to the Town and that the term of the MOU would be ten years.

Motion by Sharon Harkay to adopt the Thetford Volunteer Fire Department and Emergency Services agreement of Memorandum of understanding for a period of ten years, ending in 2036.

No further discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Steve Tofel, in favor; Li Shen, in favor; David Goodrich, in favor; David Forbes, in favor; Sharon Harkay, in favor.

9. Possible Adoption of Penalties for Zoning Permit Violations

At a prior meeting, the Board had asked that TM Story and Zoning Admin. Kelly Gardner work together to create a proposal of fees for zoning violations. The Board reviewed the document that they brought to this meeting and suggested some formatting changes as well as an addition that referred to by-laws.

Motion by David Forbes to adopt the revised penalties for zoning permit violation schedule as presented on February 23, 2026.

Roll Call Vote: Steve Tofel, in favor; Li Shen, in favor; David Goodrich, in favor; David Forbes, in favor; Sharon Harkay, in favor.

Town Moderator Sarah Aspell began the Candidates' Forum at 7:00 pm.

Each candidate was given an opportunity to briefly introduce themselves and say why they were running for election. Members of the public were then invited to ask questions.

Candidate Sharon Harkay--Selectboard (incumbent)

Member of the selectboard for 6 years, chair for 5 years.

Wants to continue involvement in on-going projects and issues including the future of the Post Mills Landfill and water quality testing, management of the Post Mills Airport, renovations of the Timothy Frost Building and the Village Store, planning for more housing, maintain roads, and keeping Thetford as affordable as possible while providing quality services to residents. Also important is maintaining good communication with residents and keeping discussions civil and respectful.

Candidate David Goodrich--Selectboard (incumbent)

Member of the selectboard for 4 years.

Said he could "ditto" everything that Sharon said. He holds a special interest in working with the Timothy Frost Building renovations, roads and infrastructure, and continues to work with the Restorative Justice Council which he chairs.

Candidate Charles "Charlie" Buttrey, Esq.--Trustee of Trust Funds

Charlie explained that there are three trust funds and three trustees. He feels the most important of these is the Thetford Farm Trust which has funds of over a million dollars, and its purpose is to provide short-term assistance to Thetford residents in need. Trustees monitor and ensure that the funds are invested correctly and wisely, distributed according to the purpose and conditions of the trust, and making sure that everything is recorded and accounted for accurately and honestly. He would like to make it more widely known to residents as he feels that the funds are under-utilized. He also thanked outgoing trustee, Pril Hall, for her service.

Candidate Ellen Stone--Cemetery Commission

She was encouraged to apply for the position by Commission Chair Sam Eaton. She would be the third generation of her family to serve in the position. She feels that preserving cemeteries is important for both past and future generations and feels she can work with other Commission members to assure that Thetford's cemeteries are well-cared for and appropriately maintained.

Candidate Tracy Borst-Town Clerk (incumbent)

Has been Thetford's Town Clerk and Treasurer for 23 years. What draws her to the job is the close connection that she has to residents, and the "milestones" of life in which she is involved every day. She understands the need to preserve records accurately and securely and takes the responsibilities of her job very seriously. As treasurer, she is always mindful of the need to save taxpayer funds and invest wisely. She has expanded services offered by the Clerk's office, and she and her staff take advantage of furthering their education and obtaining relevant certifications in order to keep up with the increasingly complex nature of the job.

Candidate Sarah Aspell-Town Moderator (incumbent)

This will be the first year that she will be moderating Town Meeting but thinks its a "really incredible tradition" that she would like to "take care of for the future".

The process of “direct democracy” is very powerful and letting it “be as it will”, is very important to her. She is very excited about beginning her role.

The Forum was then opened to questions from the public. These questions addressed governance, fairness, community engagement, and future planning, particularly for the Timothy Frost Building.

Pre-Town Information Hearing on the FY 2026 Budget-7:30 pm

TM Story presented an overview of the proposed 2026 budget, focusing on the major trends and cost drivers. Questions from those present were encouraged.

Key Highlights:

Increased costs for roads, equipment, and general operations

Decrease of funding since time of increased federal and state funding due to COVID

Ongoing challenges with vehicle replacement resulting in higher maintenance costs

Plans to fill a vacant police officer position, partially offset by outside funding.

Tax rate increase driven largely by labor contracts, increased salaries, and rising insurance costs.

Residents asked questions and raised concerns about:

Long-term sustainability of funding sources

Road maintenance priorities and paving strategy

Size of the Town trucks

Employee wages and retention

Options for influencing the budget through Town Meeting or petitions.

Chair Harkay reconvened the Selectboard Meeting at 9:04pm.

10. Warrants and Minutes

#5.1 \$22,249.68

#6.1 \$39,967.70

#7.1 \$4,849.49

#5.2 \$17,184.01

#6.2 \$11,262.34

#5.3 \$19,057.31

#3.4 \$37,830.33

#4.4 \$33,549.22

Motion by David Forbes to approve the warrants of 2/23/26 as presented.

No discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Steve Tofel, in favor; Li Shen, in favor; David Goodrich, in favor; David Forbes, in favor; Sharon Harkay, in favor.

11. Adjourn

Motion by Steve Tofel to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 pm. No discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Steve Tofel, in favor; Li Shen, in favor; David Goodrich, in favor; David Forbes, in favor; Sharon Harkay, in favor.

