

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, August 4, 2026
7:00 PM**

**Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room & Virtual
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT**

Members Present: Steven Everett, First Selectman, Judy Ortiz, Deputy First Selectman, Rachel Riendeau, Selectman

Members Absent: William O'Brien, Selectman, Robert Hellstrom, Selectman

Others Present: Ann Dunnack, Norreen Nuhfer Farrington

Others Present Remotely: Joan Hill, Kristin Locke, Marcy Littlefield

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** S. Everett MOVED to Approve the Agenda as Presented. MOTION CARRIED 3.0.
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
 - 3.1 **Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes July 21, 2026.** The motion to approve the Board of Selectmen (BOS) regular meeting minutes for July 21, 2026, was tabled until the next BOS meeting due to a lack of quorum.
4. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** Noreen Nuhfer Farrington, 3 Nuhfer Drive addressed the Board regarding questions she had on the Town Meeting to be held on August 12, 2026. S. Everett explained that they will answer those questions later on in the meeting.

Lisa Simon, 465 Route 87 expressed concern about the low lake level and asked what happened with the lake level this year.

S. Everett emphasized adherence to strict guidelines set in the policy regarding seasonal Columbia Lake water levels and dam management for managing the lake's water levels. The draw-down typically occurs in October or November to facilitate dock repairs. In February, the gate was closed to allow the water to start coming up. The guidelines mandate draw-down if ice thickness exceeds two inches to prevent property damage. These protocols have been established for many years.

He explained this year we had a deep freeze with over six inches of ice. Last year's late storm resulted in strong winds that blew ice, causing significant damage to several docks amounting to thousands of dollars.

Despite adherence to guidelines intended to manage the lake, a large ice pack formed, and a cold winter delayed the melting process. Additionally, insufficient fall and spring rains resulted in low lake levels. He expressed disappointment but emphasized that the guidelines are crucial for effectively managing the lake for the community's benefit.

Lisa Simon commented that it is a risk lake homeowners take when you live on the water that there could be property damage, and she said it doesn't seem fair to the rest of the community. She also asked about the effect of algae blooms due to the low water level. S. Everett stated we engage consultants to monitor and manage algae and invasive species effectively.

M. Roickle, 34 Erdoni Rd. said the primary purpose of drawdowns since the 1970s is to protect the environment and ecology of the lake. Maintaining lower water levels prevents native plants from becoming invasive. This process is influenced by natural conditions and is more of an art than a science. Recently, rainfall helped reduce the lake's deficit from minus 18 inches to minus 10 inches, approaching baseline levels.

Jeffrey Smith, 330 Route 87 said he grew up in Noank and every winter they took the dock apart and every spring put the dock back in.

5. OLD BUSINESS: None.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

6.1 Set Town Meeting to address petition on August 12, 2026, at 7:00 pm. Discussion ensued about the process of setting the town meeting on August 12th. S. Everett MOVED to Refer to the Town Meeting on August 12, 2026, at 7:00 pm in Yeomans Hall whether to override the action of the Board of Selectmen taken on July 7, 2026, to Authorize the Town Administrator to prepare an ordinance, work with CRCOG on a Safety Action Plan and put together an RFP to choose a vendor for Automatic Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices to be used in the Town of Columbia. MOTION CARRIED 3.0.

6.2 Hop River Mills Archaeological Preserve Deed Restriction. Joan Hill 24 Cards Mill Rd. and a member of the Hop River Mills Management Committee presented a draft document for establishing a state archaeological preserve at the site, which would protect archaeological features while allowing passive recreation activities like camping and kayaking. The town attorney recommended reviewing the document with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) first before proceeding with legal formalization. M. Walter recommended that Joan Hill and Ann Dunnack work with the Town Administrator's office and submit to SHPO for review, after which it would be sent to the town attorney for final legal review.

7. COLUMBIA LAKE / DAM / BEACH: None.

8. APPOINTMENTS / RESIGNATIONS:

8.1 Appointment of Beverly Ciurylo as an alternate on the Horace W. Porter School HVAC Building Committee. M. Walter clarified with the town attorney that two signatures are needed for check issuance, ensuring Beverly is not the only signer. Beverly would only assist as an alternate in emergencies when a quorum is not met, particularly as the project is nearing completion. S. Everett MOVED to Appoint Beverly Ciurylo as an alternate on the Horace W. Porter School HVAC Building Committee. MOTION CARRIED 3.0.

8.2 Appointment of Mark Walter as the Town's Representative on the Eastern Region Tourism District Board. S. Everett MOVED to Appoint Mark Walter as the Town of Columbia's Representative on the Eastern Region Tourism District Board for a three-year term effective August 4, 2026, and ending August 4, 2029. MOTION CARRIED 3.0.

9. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

- 9.1 Guidance for Municipalities developing an Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Device (ATESD) Plan.** M. Walter provided guidance in the BOS packet on developing an Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Device (ATESD) plan. The process includes submitting an application to the Connecticut DOT, selecting a vendor, drafting a development plan, and reviewing traffic data to identify Columbia's most dangerous locations for speed camera placement. He noted that this comprehensive process will take significant time and cannot be completed quickly. The packet also included information from the Town of Clinton comparing ALPR cameras, or Flock cameras, with ATESD cameras, as well as Clinton's draft ordinance. He stated that Columbia is considering the ATESD program.
- 9.2 New Bill on State-wide Fire Protection.** M. Walter was informed by the Fire Chief about House Bill 5460, Public Act Number 26-3.144, regarding statewide fire protection. Key aspects of the bill require municipalities to comply by July 1st, 2027, by establishing and submitting a local fire protection plan to relevant authorities. Active involvement of towns with their fire departments is necessary to ensure proper response times, membership, and maintenance of equipment.
- 9.3 2026-2036 Conservation Plan of Development.** M. Walter thanked the staff and all the boards and commissions for their hard work developing and putting together the updated Conservation Plan of Development.
- 9.4 Final BOS/BOE FY 26-27 Budget.** The final budget document for the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education FY 26/27 was provided and is provided on the Town website.
- 10. CORRESPONDENCE:**
- 10.1 Letter from ROV August 11, 2026, Democratic & Republican Primaries**
- 10.2 The Willimantic Chronicle:**
- **Trails master plan sets vision for Mono Pond State Park.**
 - **Main Moose Returns.**

11. BUDGET:

11.1 Transfers: S. Everett MOVED to Approve the Transfers for FY 2025-2026 Totaling \$55,221.00 reflected in the Summary of Transfers. MOTION CARRIED 3.0.

TRANSFER #	FROM ACCOUNT #	FROM ACCOUNT	AMOUNT	TO ACCOUNT #	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL
2026-030	10-4113-811	Mach/Equip < \$5,000	\$2,242.00	10-4113-515	Contracted Services	\$2,242.00
2026-031	10-4117-230	Electricity	\$317.00	10-4115-120	Telephone/Communications	\$307.00
				10-4115-230	Electricity	\$10.00
2026-032	10-4130-515	Contracted Services	\$275.00	10-4130-500	Professional/Tech	\$275.00
2026-033	10-4132-300	General Supplies	\$134.00	10-4132-110	Postage	\$134.00
2026-034	10-4133-130	Legal Notices	\$750.00	10-4133-110	Postage	\$1,355.00
	10-4133-500	Professional/Tech	\$605.00			
	10-4133-500	Professional/Tech	\$13.00	10-4133-300	General	\$13.00
2026-035	10-4136-010	Salaries-Finance	\$9,905.00	10-4134-010	Salaries-Town Clerk	\$9,905.00
2026-036	10-4134-300	General Supplies	\$686.00	10-4134-130		\$686.00
2026-037	10-4230-110	Postage	\$103.00	10-4230-300	General Supplies	\$103.00
	10-4230-750	Conferences/Seminars	\$400.00	10-4230-500	Professional/Tech	\$734.00
	10-4230-770	Transportation	\$334.00			
2026-038	10-4250-600	Repairs/Maintenance	\$779.00	10-4250-010	Salaries-Van Services	\$557.00
				10-4250-130	Legal Notices	\$222.00
2026-039	10-4260-230	Electricity	\$485.00	10-4260-300	General Supplies	\$485.00
2026-040	10-4800-900	Contingency	\$6,029.00	10-4310-500	Professional/Tech	\$6,029.00
2026-041	10-4330-811	Mach/Equip<\$5,000	\$1,653.00	10-4330-300	General Supplies	\$1,524.00
				10-4330-770	Transportation	\$129.00
2026-042	10-4640-010	Salaries-Beach Services	\$6,298.00	10-4350-010	Salaries- Lake Management	\$6,298.00
	10-4350-500	Professional/Tech	\$500.00	10-4350-300	General Supplies	\$541.00
	10-4350-520	Printing	\$41.00	10-4350-600	Repairs/Maintenance	\$288.00
	10-4350-120	Telephone/Communications	\$288.00			
2026-043	10-4410-010	Salaries-Public Works	\$870.00	10-4410-011	Salaries-Public Works OT	\$870.00

TRANSFER #	FROM ACCOUNT #	FROM ACCOUNT	AMOUNT	TO ACCOUNT #	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL
2026-044	10-4520-010	Salaries- Inland Wetlands	\$112.00	10-4510-010	Contracted-Planning & Zoning	\$112.00
	10-4510-515	Contracted Services	\$2,398.00	10-4510-130	Legal Notices	\$2,398.00
2026-045	10-4520-500	Professional/Tech	\$679.00	10-4520-130	Legal Notices	\$679.00
2026-046	10-4530-011	Salaries- Facilities OT	\$276.00	10-4530-240	Fuel	\$276.00
	10-4530-010	Salaries- Facilities	\$968.00	10-4530-300	General Supplies	\$968.00
	10-4530-750	Conferences/Seminars	\$763.00	10-4530-515	Contracted Services	\$763.00
	10-4530-011	Salaries- Facilities OT	\$9.00	10-4530-515	Contracted Services	\$9.00
	10-4530-011	Salaries- Facilities OT	\$183.00	10-4530-520	Printing	\$183.00
	10-4530-010	Salaries- Facilities	\$2,009.00	10-4530-811	Mach/Equip < \$5,000	\$2,009.00
2026-048	10-4540-010	Salaries- Conservation & Ag	\$1,700.00	10-4540-300	General Supplies	\$2,070.00
	10-4540-110	Postage	\$370.00	10-4540-500	Professional/Tech	\$900.00
	10-4540-520	Printing	\$500.00	10-4540-500	Professional/Tech	
	10-4540-720	Professional Dues	\$400.00			
2026-049	10-4570-110	Postage	\$1,050.00	10-4570-010	Salaries- Land Use	\$8,393.00
	10-4570-300	General Supplies	\$250.00	10-4570-720	Professional Dues	\$20.00
	10-4570-515	Contracted Services	\$900.00			
	10-4570-710	Professional Improvement	\$495.00			
	10-4112-020	Payroll Taxes	\$5,698.00			
	10-4570-710	Professional Development	\$20.00			
2026-050	10-4640-300	General Supplies	\$328.00	10-4640-500	Professional/Tech	\$328.00
2026-051	10-4670-140	Advertising	\$499.00	10-4670-110	Postage	\$499.00
	10-4670-230	Electricity	\$381.00	10-4670-500	Professional/Tech	\$271.00
				10-4670-720	Professional Dues	\$110.00
2026-052	28-4270-515	Contracted Services	\$2,526.00	28-4270-300	General Supplies	\$210.00
				28-4270-600	Repairs/Maintenance	\$2,316.00
Total 2025-2026 Transfers			\$55,221.00			\$55,221.00

S. Everett MOVED to Set a Town Meeting on August 18, 2026, at 6:45 pm the Adella G. Urban Conference Room for the following purpose:

CLAUSE 1: To approve a budget transfer for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 \$13,777.00 from 10-4112-040 Group Insurance to cover the cost above budget for town employees' pension benefits to the following accounts:

- 10-4112-050 Pension Expense \$12,824.00
- 10-4112-110 Postage \$890.00
- 10-4112-300 General Supplies \$63.00

CLAUSE 2: To Approve a budget transfer for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 totaling \$21,654.00 from the following accounts:

- 10-4112-040 Group Insurance \$10,000.00
- 10-4112-060 457 Employer Match \$4,154.00
- 10-4112-230 Electricity \$7,500.00

to account number 10-4530-500 Facilities Professional/Tech line to cover the cost of year end facilities projects: DPW repair to siding, HVAC repairs and alarm system repairs.

CLAUSE 3: To Approve a budget transfer for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 totaling \$100,000.00 to Capital Account number 20-6206-002 Facilities Capital Improvement-Buildings in order to cover the cost of a water filtration system for Town buildings that tested positive for PFAS from the following accounts:

- 10-4136-010 Salaries-Finance
- 10-4410-010 Salaries- DPW

MOTION CARRIED 3.0.

11.2 Refunds: None.

12. APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS: S. Everett MOVED to Approve the Payment of Bills as presented, totaling \$184,204.21, consisting of FY 25/26 Regular, 26/27 Regular, Unemployment Claim, Credit Card, and Paychex. MOTION CARRIED 3.0.

13. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS: Noreen Nuhfer Farrington, 3 Nuhfer Drive asked the following questions:

- Is there a draft or template for the speed cameras that has been written or reviewed by the town yet? S. Everett said no. M. Walter said that at tonight's meeting he provided examples of draft ordinances from other towns, but that we had not drafted an ordinance for Columbia yet.
- What will the verbiage be for the ordinance and is the text available? M. Walter said that the verbiage for the town meeting will be Yes, I want to reverse the motion. No, I do not want to reverse the motion.
- How will the vote be counted at the meeting? M. Walter said paper ballots. The Registrars will be available to verify eligibility of voters.
- Will the town meeting be posted on the town green billboard? M. Walter said yes.

14. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS: None.

15. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: Real estate per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(D); Pending Litigation per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(B); Personnel per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(A).** S. Everett MOVED to Enter into Executive Session at 8:06 pm and invited the Town Administrator, Mark Walter to join. Executive Session ended at 8:18 pm with No Action Taken.
 - 15.1 **Legal:** No Action Taken
16. **ADJOURNMENT:** S. Everett MOVED to Adjourn at 8:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie