Town of Litchfield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
January 26, 2026

1.0 Convenes 6:30 PM; Pledge to Flag; Selectmen and Guests present
Selectmen: Gary Parker (Zoom), Chairman; Clarence Gowell III (identified as Rick in these minutes); Tom Pelletier.
Staff: Kelly Weissenfels, Town Manager; Michael Sherman, Fire Chief (absent); Corey Hanson, Public Works Director; John Upham, Transfer Station Manager (absent); Tom Wood, Chm. Budget Comm. (Zoom); Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer (absent); and others per the sign in sheet (attached).

2.0 Minutes of Jan 12th, 2025
No minutes

3.0 Reports and Correspondence
3.1 Town Manager
A. Summer road construction will take place on Rt.197 from the Litchfield Turnpike overpass to 201/Brunswick Road in Richmond. This will be in an effort to fix the road by taking it down to dirt and fully repaving the surface.
B. The most recent storm and cold snap gave Litchfield the opportunity to use the emergency texting system. There are currently 105 people who have signed up to receive notifications. This most recently was used to alert the residents of the intense cold that was on the way and being monitored. Also, where they could get information pertaining to warming centers.
C. The 2025 audit is progressing, 2024 fiscal year (FY) is finalized. This is the first step to getting FY2025 completed. The auditors have now entered tax season, so the focus on backlogged project will be paused. Kelly said that for the first time since he's been Town Manager the (2025) cash reconciliation has been worked out to the penny with the bank and TRIO.
3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector
Steve has been working through the list of properties that need cleaning up, referred to junk yards (without permits) and will have his update and monthly report during the next meeting.
3.3 Transfer Station
A. One bulky container and one paper container were emptied this past week.
B. Kelly added that the team at the transfer station has been doing a good job keeping up with the snow, with the help of Public Works Department.
3.4 Public Works
A. In the middle of the storm there were two trucks that broke down, Corey and his team got one repaired and going again. The 1-Ton is in question as to whether or not it will run again.

Gary asked why and Corey said failure of the transmission range sensor is the current diagnosis. Corey said that if you put the truck in reverse, it reverses. If you put the truck in neutral you can get it to click, but if you click it into drive nothing happens. Corey is in the process of getting a mechanic to come to the garage to get the truck scanned so the full extent of the issue can be revealed. The other truck that has been repaired was noted to have a bad wiper transmission; the team was able to take that out and repair it until a new one can be purchased and installed. The plan is to have four trucks running during storms to cover the Town's roads including the 1-Ton taking care of intersections. Now, with the 1-Ton out of commission, each member of the team clears their own route's intersections. The point being it takes a little longer for each route to be completed. Gary suggested getting the seasonal person who is working out very well, being dependable and fits with the team, his Class B license. Then there could be a fourth truck going around and getting the intersections cleaned up as the other three team members are on their routes. Corey will bring information to help the Selectmen to make a further decision on getting a program together to aid in continuing education for the Road Crew.

3.5 Fire & Rescue

Chief Sherman and the crew have been very busy. There was a garage fire on Ridley Road where the house was saved but unfortunately the garage was a complete loss. The mutual aid agreement is working well, and in this instance Sabattus was first on the scene by a few minutes, and those minutes made a difference in the outcome.

3.6 Emergency Management

Kennebec County is sponsoring an All-Hazards Risk Assessment which will be held on involving the Fire Chief, Town Manager and Public Works Director. This will be held on February 23rd, March 2nd, and March 9th, 2026.

3.7 Assessing Agent

The Agent was in office this past Thursday and coming up again on January 29, 2026. They are working on entering Deed information [from home sales].

3.8 Other Town Committees

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 Road funding / road maintenance planning

Toby joined the meeting tonight with a presentation of the proposed plan moving forward for maintenance of Litchfield's roads. Kelly said that this would be the time to interject to discuss the discrepancy in the carry forward in accounting. Kelly has been tracking all carry forward accounts starting with a baseline of FY2021 audit. In the process of getting through FY2022 and FY2023 audits, adjustment numbers were combined for the years and after audit completion a prior year adjustment for road expenses was not entered in the TRIO database. This was not required for current accounting, but affected the tracking spreadsheet, so Road Maintenance carryforward was approximately $300,000.00 lower than projected, leaving about $11,000. The

Road Advisory Committee has been gracious enough to revamp the plan for the maintenance of the roads and this is what Toby is here to present. Gary wanted to know if there was a stopgap in place to make sure this didn't happen again. Kelly said looking at each year individually instead of playing catchup and knowing the extent of the why and how the audit adjustments work avoid this issue in the future. Tom W. pointed out, this was a series of unfortunate events starting with the auditors communication, essentially giving what some would call bad advice. Telling someone that "it will come out in the wash" is a poor way to maintain a financial plan for anyone, especially a municipality that was playing catchup. Tom W. (as a representative of the Budget Committee) and Kelly alike took responsibility.

Toby then addressed the Board and stated he is under the impression that there was a possibility of there being a special town meeting to address the funding for the Road Crew's 1-Ton truck. He proposes that if that is the case, that would be an opportunity to propose an emergency funding request to make up the gap of the $300,000.00 that was never available, as it was spent. There are a number of items that need to be done before others and without funding there's no moving forward. Toby gave a presentation on what the committee will be looking at moving forward and an update on Dennis Hill Road completion plan, a plan which Corey has been keeping up to date on. He wanted the Select Board to know that due to increase in cost of paving materials [independent of the carryforward issue], the committee will likely be asking for closer to $700,000.00 - $750,000.00 during the next budget request cycle.

Time for discussion and questions followed. The culvert option on Dennis Hill Road will continue to be worked out as Corey is keeping up communications with the engineering company. Gary thought he remembered the original discussion of the repair of this portion of Dennis Hill Road had ended with a culvert not being an acceptable option to the government/DEP. There was a grant that has been won by Litchfield, which is a matching grant, meaning the grant will cover 50% of the cost of the project. Cost of all the projects were discussed but the numbers aren't solid yet. Kelly has a plan to have a conference call with Corey and Calderwood Engineering this week to hear what the plan is moving forward. As Corey stated, their point person for the project was out with the flu last week. Rayna and Gary pointed out there also needs to be some clarification regarding whether Litchfield / Calderwood has the right to make the decision of bridge vs culvert. Just because Calderwood is having a hard time getting the slope angels to work for a bridge does that mean the State/DEP, etc. are okay replacing the culvert and not upgrading to a bridge. Continuing the conversation about funding and spending money, Corey has been doing research as requested and got a quote for lining the roads with center yellow lines. This currently falls between $36,000.00 to $38,000.00, and does not include the white side or edge lines. As most of the issues residents have brought up in the past at various Select Board meetings are people not staying on their own sides of the roads. This seems to have centered around areas going over hills with a curve before and after (Whippoorwill being a road brought up frequently). This would not meet a unanimous decision if voted on by the Select

Board. As Toby pointed out, it's good to have the numbers and the taxpayers will just need to know taxes will increase or projects will decrease if they determine lines on the roads are important to them.

4.2 Purchase options for RAM 5500 replacement / trailer

As the current 5500 (referred to as the 1-Ton) is rapidly deteriorating the Select Board needs to take a closer look at the replacement vs repair of the truck. This was brought up at the last meeting and accurate numbers were requested. Kelly presented the Board with those numbers so they can get a handle on the situation. There is a verified balance of $83,000.00 in the Highway Equipment Funds account that could be used to purchase a truck. Corey went over specs of the trucks he's looking at and informed the Select Board that there are a number of trucks available relatively close by. Rick is going to look up the stats on gas vs diesel for future reference.

Current funds: Just over $83,000.00

Truck trade-in: approx. $20,000.00

New Truck (gas): $60,000.00

Total needed for just cabin chassis: approx. $43,000.00 from the Highway Equipment Funds account.

Flatbed $6,000.00 – $8,000.00

Corey has been doing his research, and the due diligence is notated. Corey said he has email conversations and numbers in writing.

Tom P. has made a recommendation for a special town meeting to deal with the replacement, and he would like to see the numbers and plans from Calderwood collected prior to the meeting. Kelly has a proposed plan and will get information together as soon as possible (reliant on Calderwood). Gary wanted to make sure all numbers have been obtained so when the special town meeting is scheduled they are not scrambling for numbers and can answer resident's questions.

The trailer that Corey wants to be able to haul equipment, etc. would run approx. $10,000.00 - $15,000.00, which would be used to haul all things including the excavator, culverts, etc..

4.3 Confirm extension of Transfer Station building project funds lapse date

There was a motion made by Gary to carry the Transfer Station funding available into June of 2027. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.4 Proposed mailbox policy (follows MDOT guidance)

Gary's opinion is that the MDOT guidance (attached) is appropriate and is fine to adopt. He did state though that there should always be gray area in that each case should be looked at individually, instead of a blanket "not our problem" stance being taken.

Rick offered verbiage of "The Select Board holds the right to review damages of properly (per MDOT specs) installed mailboxes and will consider reimbursement of damages and replacement."

Gary would like to continue with what Corey has taken the initiative to start. Corey has been going to residents' homes and speaking with the folks that need to raise or move their mailboxes due to an improvement to the road they reside on.
Rick suggested a flyer of some sort going out to residents with a QR Code that could be scanned that could take them to the specs to follow.
Kelly will put together a policy statement for the Select Board to review.
4.5 FY27 Budget Capital Project / Special Project topic pre-view
Kelly has had a meeting with the departments to review their budgets. The following is meant to be used as a heads up of what will be proposed at a later date, once all ducks are in a row, numbers have been collected and due diligence has been performed.
Public Works has a special project that they are proposing of additional garage space. The equipment list has increased, and they need to be able to keep things in good condition and still have workspace. They would like to see the former fuel depot lot used for additional garage space to house equipment.
Tom P. asked if that area was able to be built on. Corey has been speaking with Steve about this and it's dependent on offsets [setback distances from property lines]. Corey stated he requires five more bays at a minimum; this would have all equipment under a roofed structure.
There is also a proposal for the town to purchase traffic control trailers instead of hiring human flaggers. The cost of the trailers would be recouped in a couple of years, being offset with the savings of labor. The cost is $58,000.00 for two trailers. The selectmen agreed that these should be investigated further as they feel it's a good idea.
An excavator attachment to roll and pack the culvert / roads is another item that will likely be seen requested on the June 2026 budget.
John at the Transfer Station has requested a pole barn or three-sided structure to go over the recycled containers. As well as the need for a winter shelter around the hydraulics of the compactor as there is difficulty keeping it warm in the winter. What he would really like to see is a cardboard baler, if not this year, then next would be ideal. All of this would be included in the permitting process for the current project. Tom P. said that they would need another full-time employee to manage the baler alone. Gary made some suggestions about things he saw at other transfer stations as well, Tom P. made some suggestions from what he had heard from a family member that works at a transfer station.
Emergency Management has suggested they would like to be able to pay a stipend to volunteers if full-time shelter were needed, as it's increasingly difficult to find volunteers. In discussion it was suggested to start small with possibly $2,000.00 - $3,000.00 that collects in an account up to a certain amount.
Tom would like to see the budgeting discussion schedule published so that taxpayers know when each topic will be presented to the Select Board and can attend if they have something to

add or questions they would like to ask. Tom W. and Kelly will discuss and come up with a schedule. Kelly said he would have numbers to present at the next meeting.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

6.1

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #14 $90,813.55

There was a motion made by Rick to approve town warrant #14 in the amount of $90,813.55. This was seconded by Tom P., vote 2-0 (1 abstention).

7.2 Town Payroll #13 $46,451.06

After discussion, a vote was made without a formal motion.

7.3 Town Payroll #14 $33,934.68

There was a motion made by Rick to approve town payroll #14 in the amount of $33,934.68. This was seconded by Tom P., vote 2-0 (1 abstention).

7.4 Town Payroll #15 $52,345.81

There was a motion made by Rick to approve town payroll #15 in the amount of $52,345.81. This was seconded by Tom P., vote 2-0 (1 abstention).

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Gary asked if Kelly if he would be able to give numbers of the projected savings of Public Works going from a 4-man plow crew to a 3-man plow crew. Also, any other cost-saving that will be seen over the next year as this will be a determining factor in what type of budget gets approved.

8.2 Gary would like to see Kelly reach out to other companies for the transfer station site plan, it's on Kelly's list.

8.3 Gary doesn't believe that there should be a special meeting for the Rt 197 intersection by Gowell's. He suggests just writing the letter to the representatives and sending it out to whomever needs to see it. There shouldn't be a list of options, etc., just make the move and let it be known what the representatives of the Town of Litchfield want done and keep moving forward to get changes made.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Continuing Education for Road Crew

9.2 Special Town Meeting Plan

9.3 Mailbox Policy

9.4 Rt197 corridor
9.5 Transfer Station plans
9.6 Water Purification Programs
9.8 Web page upgrades

10.0 Adjournment at 8:45pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker