

**Town of Litchfield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
March 2nd, 2026**

1.0 Convenes 6:3 PM; Pledge to Flag; Selectmen and Guests present

Selectmen: Gary Parker, Chairman; Clarence Gowell III (identified as Rick in these minutes) (Absent); Tom Pelletier.

Staff: Kelly Weissenfels, Town Manager; Michael Sherman, Fire Chief; Corey Hanson, Public Works Director (Absent); John Upham, Transfer Station Manager; Tom Wood, Chm. Budget Comm.; Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer (Absent); and others per the sign in sheet (attached).

2.0 Minutes of January 26th, 2026, and February 9th, 2026

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve the minutes of January 26th, 2026. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 absent).

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve minutes of February 9th, 2026. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 absent).

Gary asked if there was any way to move the audit back (start earlier) since the audit company doesn't have time to do Litchfield's audit during tax season. Kelly said that if the information is ready on time, then the (December) timing should work out fine. All had been back logged for some time, now they are all caught up so the timing should work better. This will stay as is for now.

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

A. RJD appraisal completed first quarter of the town review, 25% of properties in Litchfield have been visited and reviewed. 517 parcels were visited, and changes noted on 186 parcels. So 36% of the parcels visited had a change up or down. Findings were generally improvements or demolitions done without permits. There was a total gain in valuation of about \$520,000.00. Broken down, there was an increase of \$624,500.00 and a decrease of \$105,000.00. Findings were improvements or demolitions done without permits. The tax gain to the town is about \$5,000.00 per year.

B. The staff at the Town Office have been pursuing the implementation of online property tax payments. These will be offered by Government Window, in partnership with TRIO (the Town's accounting software). This is at no cost to the town; the software companies make their profit from the credit card fee(s) and the one-time electronic check fees. Kelly is anticipating having information out in the next Sodalite and the program up and running for April's tax bills to be paid online.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

Steve will have his report ready for the next meeting, next week.

3.3 Transfer Station

A. John said he had the glass container emptied this week.

B. Three new stickers were issued for a new total of 3188. Business does seem to be picking back up with the nicer weather that has been experienced lately.

C. As noted in the Sodalite the Swap Shop will be accepting items starting the first of April and opening for viewing/swapping April 15, 2026.

3.4 Public Works

A. Plow truck T25 is at O'Connor's as it died on Dead River Road during plowing. This is the newest truck, and is just outside of warranty. O'Connor's has said it needs a new wiring harness and has does not yet know the cost, or when the job will be completed.

B. The 5500 passed for an inspection sticker this morning and the rest of the fleet will be taken in once the wings are off in the Spring, so they will fit in the inspection bay. Corey is looking for someone to come into the shop that does inspections, so the trucks do not have to leave the property.

C. Ads will be going out for summertime full-time help, possibly 2 people, depending on how the vote goes regarding purchase of automated stop light/flagging machines at the town meeting.

3.5 Fire & Rescue

A. The fire trucks are going through regular service and inspection sticker rotations tomorrow morning. Chief Sherman said all equipment is in working order currently.

B. In the Spring there will be water pump training, basic pumps class will be coming up sometime in April.

C. Tom P. commented he would ask/like to have the Fire Department hold off on training at the Sportsmen's club until before/after May so the growth of the fish for the fishing derby won't be disturbed.

3.6 Emergency Management

A. Litchfield EMS has begun working with Kennebec County EMS to improve risk management. Today was the first workshop with municipal teams with 80 people present from across the county.

3.7 Assessing Agent

Ellory Bane will be on site again Thursday, March 12, 2026.

3.8 Other Town Committees

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 Ambulance staffing proposal – Chief Sieberg

Chief Sieberg presented a plan to add two people to the ambulance roster in order to be able to have all three trucks go out if/when needed. They are looking for answers back soon, but want to give the municipalities time to think through the proposal. Chief Sieberg will have more solid numbers once they have a better idea of support from all the municipalities they serve. The costs were higher than hoped, including the increase in pay for current staff. He would be fine to push things down the line if they cannot do the full presented plan immediately. Andrew Moore of the Litchfield Rec Committee asked where/how the numbers came to be. Chief Sieberg said the addition of two staff members would help to be able to have a swing shift and would give better coverage.

Another question of how the numbers are calculated was asked. Chief explained that after the bills are paid (i.e. insurance pay outs) the towns are looked at individually, the towns that use the ambulance service the most are charged the higher fees. Last year in Litchfield there were 394 call responses, and a three-year average for Litchfield is 357 calls responded to.

Chief Sieberg is not interested in only adding one new full-time position.

Chief Sherman was asked if he had anything to add, he noted there is no real alternative, and the level of service is top notch. As Gary pointed out, a pertinent part of the puzzle to remember is what the cost would be if Gardiner Emergency Services were not available to Litchfield and/or not available at all.

4.2 Dennis Hill Rd culvert replacement update

Since last meeting, Kelly was able to obtain a better understanding of the cost associated with the restructuring of the Dennis Hill culvert. Kelly said that the \$200,000 matching grant awarded by the State of \$200,000.00 can be extended and he has asked it to be approved through spring of 2028.

The current options for the project, after discussion with the engineers, are as follows:

1. Round culvert comprised of galvanized steel. The steel would always be exposed to water, reducing the lifespan relative to the other options. – turned down as a viable option by the two members of the Select Board present.
2. Aluminum arched culvert on concrete footings. Estimated cost of materials of \$145,000.00. There would also be an option of a box culvert that comes in precast sections. This might be a better option since assembling the other culvert options would have thousands of bolts to fasten.
3. The box culvert has an estimated materials cost between \$250,000.00 and \$300,000.00 with an additional cost due the need of a larger crane.

Kelly is recommending budgeting for parts and materials in this budget season and putting the job out to bid for completion in FY28, since potential bidders likely have full schedules already for this season.

Gary suggested option 2 as it probably will last the longest. He would like to pursue this and doesn't disagree that it probably will not be able to get done this year.

Kelly has done some research and found that on average galvanized steel culverts last 20 to 50 years. The original option of the bridge was rejected by the engineer due to the high slope of the road.

Tom P. asked for clarification on installation date, this would likely be done during FY28 (between July and Oct 2027). Also how does this affect the work planned on roads currently. This will be discussed in the road committee meeting. Their next meeting will be on Wednesday March 18, 2026.

Tom W. suggested not covering the culvert area with the remaining asphalt until the culvert is replaced. Then the town won't be doing work twice and paying for it twice.

4.3 Transfer Station permit site plan and stormwater management proposals

Kelly received two proposals, the first was briefly discussed at the last meeting. This was for \$14,600.00 to complete the topographic survey and the site plan for the existing layout, and a hydrocad model of surface run-off. The second estimate came in from Sevee-Maher Engineering, a well-known engineering service at \$9,800.00. Neither of the estimates include all items needed for the permit, and the town will be responsible for completing and submitting the permit. Kelly said the estimates seem to be covering all the same work, an apples-to-apples comparison. As Gary pointed out, there is a huge difference in the estimates. Something must be done to move forward as the town has already done work (in past years) that isn't approved at this point. The application would cost another \$2,100.00. Gary would like to move forward with Sevee-Maher coming in to get the work done.

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve the use of Sevee Maher Engineering to complete the site plan, etc. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 absent).

4.4 Kennebec Sheriff dispatching move cost proposal update

Continued from last meeting, Kelly received more information regarding the proposed increased \$50,000.00 cost to the town of Litchfield. Kennebec County Sheriff said it mainly comes down to the software that is being used. Historically, the county has done the work with two separate versions of recording software. One of the versions of software will still work when used, it however, will no longer be supported (by the software company). This means the Sheriff has the option of not moving to new software. Kelly again will be getting more information, he believes they are bringing this up early, which means there is time to find out all the information needed before next year's (FY28) budget.

4.5 FY27 budget review – Fire & Rescue, Transfer Station, Town Office, Conservation Commission, Senior Center

Starting with the review of Fire & Rescue, Chief Sherman presented his budget proposal/request. Starting at the end with the total proposed budget of \$267,150.00. Broken down this represents a four percent increase over last year. Chief Sherman's goal was to hold the line as much as possible this fiscal year. Generally speaking, the increases are seen around things Chief Sherman has no control over, i.e. repair services, equipment maintenance,

electricity, etc. Chief Sherman still has some verifying to complete. Purchase services amount has changed. The fee paid for janitorial services has increased and is now coming out of Fire & Rescue budget as the cleaning crew hasn't only been cleaning the Fire Station. Gary wants the budget reviewed as there is now \$5,600.00 that could come out of another budget's costs. Chief Sherman clarified, the fee paid out would be roughly half of the \$5,600.00 as not quite a year ago the cleaning service used doubled their fee, which kept them in-line with area cleaning services. Kelly will be looking at the budget to see where the funds are listed, he believes it was in the Fire Department's previous budget.

****Video lost at 1:35:39, video regained 1:37:23****

The chief was asked if the salary line item includes benefits. Tom W. answered that it does not, all town employee benefits are lumped together under the line item of insurance/benefits noted on a different spreadsheet.

Emergency Management has a total request of \$55,162.00

Increases to electricity, including the power needed to run the repeater system/radio system that public works also utilizes. Also, another line-item noted is the dispatch system that will see an increase of \$2,329.00 for the already approved contract increase. This may be seeing increases otherwise as previously discussed during this meeting (more to come). Chief Sherman will be looking through the licensing renewals noted as they might not be due this year.

Transfer Station budget was discussed next. John explained his budget and plans to move forward. John said the increase seen is mainly for labor, mileage has also been altered now that he is going to be keeping track of his mileage. Tire removal cost increased January first, so that has been noted. The leaf and brush pile is going to be in the budget yearly so that will be maintained, instead of building up and the fee for removal doing the same. Tick remediation and maintenance stays on the budget as it has proven to be useful, there are no more reports of ticks from employees and volunteers alike. Gary noted that miscellaneous expenditures went from \$150.00 to \$2,000.00. John explained that this was for new signs and the sign that went on to the office was a private donation, John would like to have signs made up for the property as a whole. He would like to see one made for the swap shop, etc. (13 signs in total). This would be to replace the yellow fading signage around the property, and the estimate came in for the project at \$2,000.00. This is a local business, that the proprietor said he would mainly be charging for the materials. Gary said he was doing due diligence to get clarification.

Moving on the 220 -225-line items were discussed (tipping and hauling fees). John explained the containers are going to be taken away more often and Kelly added that there is a 6% increase in the transportation fee as well. Tom W. pointed out that the signs are more of a one-time capital improvement project, so they could go into the Capital improvement portion of the budget for the Transfer Station. Then the miscellaneous would remain at \$150.00.

Kelly discussed the Town Office budget and said it covers two departments, primarily personnel, and the other is the running of the town office. Personnel budget was reviewed first, the

significant increase(s) / decrease(s) seen were, the town manager's contract needs to be negotiated still and this needs to be started soon. Next is office staff, at the end of last year Kelly added a part-time position to the already existing two full-time positions in the front office. That, in addition to the wage increases for the entire staff is responsible for the increase. Legal as well as audit services are listed, audit services should be decreasing as costs for audit years are not overlapping into the next fiscal year. Also noted was an increase in code enforcement staffing as well as mileage for code enforcement. Kelly said that he plans to continue to use the accounting consultant that was employed to help educate staff on how accounting for the town should be handled. Automated timecards will start being used, ACH will be utilized as well. Gary told Kelly that he needed to pick a time to have a negotiations meeting (executive session) regarding his contract.

Town office line items noted started with IT support, which did not see any increase in fees. Custodial services utilized once weekly, building maintenance repair, building securities, heating will see a decrease in oil and increase in electricity due to the new heat pumps, TRIO should be sending it's next years cost by the end of the month, purchase commodities (server update is needed), etc.

Conservation Commission's annual budget remained the same, and they are asking for an additional \$4,500.00 again fund the Maine Conservation Corp crew. A total of \$13,500.00 for the full budget.

Senior Center looking for a salary increase for the year of \$500.00 and a transportation fee to be added. This was asked for prior to the new director taking over.

The Recreation Committee was added on to the budget talk and Andrew Moore presented.

Building maintenance: the committee is looking to buy a CONEX box to store equipment and to remove it from the town garage. Kelly said there are two required budgets, one is to maintain fields (funded by the town) and buildings, and the other is (the enterprise fund, from fees and fundraising for things like jerseys, and operation of sports (hiring referees).

4.6 Confirm extension of lapse date for invasive plants special project.

Kelly said the previous lapse date for this special project was June 2025, and needs to be extended to pay for a late submission invoice.

There was a motion made by Tom P. to extend the lapse date to June 2026 for the invasive plant special project. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2 (Gary hand, Tom P. Verbal) - 0 (1 absent).

4.7 Request for liquor license renewal – 197 Diner

Requests are now coming electronically, Kelly requested a motion to allow him to approve the license online, on behalf of the Select Board.

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve the renewal of the 197 Diner's liquor license. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2 - 0 (1 absent).

Tom P. asked if this gives Kelly the authority he needs and Kelly responded with a yes, it does.

4.8 Mailbox policy

Kelly presented the final version to the Select Board with the added verbiage requested.

There was a motion made by Tom P. to accept the town of Litchfield Mailbox Policy as presented during the March 2, 2026, meeting. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2 - 0 (1 absent).

4.9 Rt. 197 Corridor survey

Rayna finalized the letter/survey, Gary is in favor and Tom P. was mostly concerned with the delivery system. The question was asked, why if this is a state road does the town need to get involved. As discussed in multiple previous meetings, the State, in the opinion of the Select Board isn't maintaining traffic flow correctly and the Selectmen believe that if there was more control of traffic (reducing speed limits in the surrounding areas as well as bringing attention to the intersection) there would be fewer accidents. There has been an increase in accidents due to a multitude of reasons. The Selectmen feel that it's time to do something and the State has the authority to change the requested items. Please see attached survey/letter.

There was a motion made by Tom P. to put the letter presented into the Sodalite (stuffer), on Facebook page and the website. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2 – 0 (1 absent).

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

6.1

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #16 \$116,300.84

There was a motion made by Gary to approve town warrant #16 in the amount of \$116,300.84. This was seconded by Tom P., vote 2 – 0 (1 absent).

7.2 Town Payroll #17 \$35,244.20

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve town payroll #17 in the amount of \$35,244.20. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2 – 0 (1 absent).

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Tom P. asked if there was any update on the Whippoorwill property. Kelly said he hasn't heard anything and he plans to move forward with selling it this spring.

8.2 Tom P. also asked if there was any new information on the water filtration system. Kelly said he is waiting for a second quote.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Rt 197 corridor survey

10.0 Adjournment at 9:29 pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker
and Kelly Weissenfels