

Town of Litchfield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2026

1.0 Convenes 6:30 PM; Pledge to Flag; Selectmen and Guests present

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

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

2.0 Minutes of March 23rd, 2026

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve the minutes of March 23, 2026. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

A. Kelly was off for a week, so he is now working through emails and questions to catch up.

B. Property taxes are coming in as this is the last week to not incur late charges. Kelly is hoping to have the tax payment program up and running by April 20, 2026. This will allow residents to not only pay taxes but also track payments and see if they are up to date.

C. Smithfield Plantation timber harvest is complete, with a net income of \$10,922.62. This was more than expected.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

A. Steve handed out his monthly report, which was reviewed.

B. Plumbing inspections are starting to pick up in the last two weeks.

C. Steve let the Selectmen know there would be someone coming in the last meeting of May to discuss a waiver for the Road Ordinance. There's a subdivision that is being applied for, which can't be approved until everyone knows that the road fits within the road ordinance's boundaries or the waivers being asked for are granted by the Select Board, as they administer the Road Ordinance. Steve handed the Selectmen a proposal for the subdivision, to take home with them as a read ahead for May's final meeting. Steve doesn't yet have an application so questions will need to wait until he has more information.

3.3 Transfer Station

A. There was a metal container emptied this week.

B. The Transfer Station issued seven new stickers for a total of 3220 so far.

C. The Swap Shop will be open for the season on Friday April 17, 2026.

D. The brush pile will be open the first weekend of May, weather permitting. The ground needs to dry up so vehicles can get in and out. John is hopeful this will be the case the first week of May.

3.4 Public Works

A. Corey and Public Works Crew have been busy getting their area and the roads ready for summer. The posted signs were taken down during the day today, April 13, 2026.

B. There was a new hire last week, Corey would like to have one more person hired with a class B license. There have been a couple applications, but none have panned out.

C. The road crew will be back to work this coming week so please drive carefully.

D. Tom P. asked how inspections of the trucks were coming. He still must get the trucks inspected as they keep having things go wrong or break down. The plows, wings and sanders are now removed from the trucks, so inspection stickers will be next on the to-do list.

3.5 Fire & Rescue

A. Chief Sherman leaned into a good segway and said that his fleet is all stickered, however the newest engine had a check engine light popping back up so that is being scheduled with dealer service to find out what the issue is.

B. There will be training for the department on the 25th and 26th of April, in Gardiner. They will be working on hydrant work as well. Chief Sherman has made sure there will be coverage for the Litchfield department.

C. Gary asked about a letter that was received from Wales. Chief Sherman said that Litchfield will be working with surrounding towns to make sure there is coverage for the area.

D. Gary also asked if there was any more information regarding a fly car and another location for emergency staffing. Chief Sherman said they will not have any more information until they are able to all get together and discuss the options further.

E. The stumps are still visible as Gary pointed out. Chief Sherman has a plan to move forward but now that the ground is soft after the snow melted, he will not be waiting much longer to work on getting rid of the stumps and shoots that are coming up again.

3.6 Emergency Management

A. Chief Sherman said the workshop that was put on by the County regarding risk assessment, etc. is now over and they will be moving forward with information exchange between Litchfield EMS and the County. Then there will be moving forward setting up protocols to help mitigate risk(s).

B. Chief Sherman, as he has done during the last few meetings, took a moment to point out that the area is still clearly showing signs of drought. He wanted to remind all that conservation of water is still an important part to play in the town's health.

3.7 Assessing Agent

Ellery, the town's assessing agent, will be in the office tomorrow April 14, 2026 to help cover questions associated with the property tax letter that just went out to local businesses asking them to provide their assessments.

3.8 Other Town Committees

The Budget Committee will be meeting on Thursday April 16, 2026, focusing on item 4.8 on tonight's agenda.

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 RSU4 proposed budget – Marco Aliberti, Superintendent

Mr. Aliberti was in attendance of the Select Board meeting to share a few updates of the still in progress school budget. The budget per Mr. Aliberti, was increased by a modest level of 1.57% from last year. Some of the highlights he reviewed included a new STEM program they have put in place for kindergarten through fourth grade students. They have a new English and language arts program for kindergarten through eighth grade as well as moving to a 1:1 iPad learning system for all students. Also, Mr. Aliberti mentioned they will be continuing their early intervention program that works with four-year-olds (pre-k). This will be taking over CDS students that were being serviced through CDS as they haven't been able to do as good of a job as RSU4 has been able to do so that State is paying RSU4 to fully take over the programming. Libby Tozier will be getting an upgrade to the vestibule with a secure entryway. Also, bids have been proposed to upgrade the siding and the windows for Libby Tozier school, they will be looking to put funds into the capitol improvement fund for that project moving forward, as well as fixing the roof. This year to try and elevate the tax burden on the towns they have cut four positions with minimal impact on the programming offered in the school. Also, creative use of grant funding will help reduce the direct tax burden seen from the school system. Mr. Aliberti said that the student body has continued to decrease by 180 since 2019 and they will continue to monitor this and try to find savings where they can. Last year to this year RSU4 is down 32 students.

4.2 FY27 proposed Capital Road Improvement / Maintenance

Toby presented the Select Board with the plan to move forward for the future. As he pointed out, this was a rough winter on the roads. This means the roads need some attention with a decreased budget this year as explained. Toby covered in detail what the road committee has recommended for the path forward, as discussed, they have provided a tiered plan, which is attached to these minutes. Tom W. and Toby will be working together with the town manager to get the funding correctly labeled to help residents understand more clearly where the funds are going and coming from.

4.3 Community Resilience Grant Resolution

Kelly said that the next step is to announce a public meeting in the next couple weeks to get all the steps finished (an evaluation needs to be completed) to acquire appropriate funding. Kelly nominated the Budget Committee to take on the project. Tom W., as chair of the Budget Committee, is willing to take on the project. He will ask the rest of the committee if they are willing to assist him. Kelly has asked the Budget Committee to propose dates for the public

hearing (with 7 days' notice, per Gary), needed to complete the actions needed to move forward.

4.4 Dennis Hill Rd culvert replacement bid review

Kelly reviewed the bid details, a slight adjustment that needs to be discussed with residents and businesses on Dennis Hill Road is that the bid is looking for the work to be done in this calendar year. Kelly will be discussing with Eric as they are the largest operation that uses the road. As Toby noted, the estimated cost for the culvert project would run roughly \$400,000.00 with a matching grant, and Kelly was able to get the grant date extended. In Gary's opinion there should be a special meeting to get bids reviewed and discussed asap so the project can and will get done this calendar year. Kelly will be getting "contingent on approval of funds" included in the bid document. Larry asked if the "5% allowance for residents" would be honored meaning that if a resident bidder was within 5% of the low bid, the resident would be giving preference. Rick asked what happens when they have a 30-day window on all services. Kelly explained how that works.

Gary is happy to review the bid and schedule a special meeting to approve the bid for posting. Tom P. stated he is on board with that plan.

There was a motion made by Gary to have a special select board meeting convened at 7:30 am, April 15, 2026, to review the contract/bid for the Dennis Hill Road culvert project. This was seconded by Tom P., vote 3-0.

Discussion was had about how this will be written in the warrant as a stand-alone article or whether it will be broken up. The Select Board all agreed that it will be broken down so the residents will be able to see what funds are coming in (grant) and how much more needs to be raised to fund the project.

4.5 Burnham Educational Trust – reconstitution of scholarship committee

Kelly read aloud the description of the trust which has been attached to these minutes. Key Bank oversees the trust. In the past few years only the high school principal and counselors would nominate who they thought were most deserved of the award, whereas the trust states the Select Board and local school board members should make the decisions. The students are required to get letters of recommendation, etc. No one student can receive any more than \$1,000.00.

Tom W. believes that the bank could be approached to have the award amount adjusted. Tom P. volunteered to contact Key Bank and RSU4 to get the ball rolling. Once students are selected the Select Board will review the applications and decide who will be receiving the award(s).

4.6 Academy Building project funds extension

There was a motion made by Gary to extend the Academy Building Project Funds to June 30, 2027. This was seconded by Tom P., vote 3-0.

4.7 Property tax supplemental: \$7,845.60 penalty for removal from tree growth, R13-014C, Paul Perreault

There was a motion made by Tom P. to accept the property tax supplement penalty \$7,845.60 penalty for removal from tree growth, R13-014C, Paul Perreault. This was seconded by Gary, vote 3-0.

4.8 FY27 Budget Review Summary and Warrant

Kelly handed out the budget document for review, and time for review was taken. Kelly has estimated an undesignated surplus amount available this year to for use at about \$500,000.00. He still needs to refine this number. He is estimating about \$1.8 million in undesignated funds, and between \$1.2 million and \$1.4 million needed to avoid borrowing. Including the \$300,000 as an estimate of what could be used to reduce taxes, Kelly is comfortable recommending at this time recommending \$800.000 as a total number available from undesignated funds for consideration in the FY27 budget. However, the auditors have said they will begin wrap-up of Litchfield's numbers at the end of the month, and Kelly will create a detailed cashflow spreadsheet and will know more for the next meeting.

The effect of the proposed RSU4 budget is a 4.55% increase in Litchfield's share of school expenses. Litchfield's share of the Kennebec County tax was reduced by 0.18%. Kelly still has some refining to do on the budget spreadsheet overall and expects to know more for the next meeting on the final numbers. Tom W., as the Budget Committee Chairperson, wants to make sure that everyone at the head table of the Town Meeting is ready and prepared with an explanation of how and why the town is in the state that it's in currently (primarily regarding the effect of the road budget). Rick would like to see the explanation in a written statement provided at the door of the town meeting, so the residents have the explanation up front. Result of the conversation was to use undesignated surplus to get the town back on course with road maintenance after the carryforward tracking mishap. This will help to cover the culvert rebuilding on Dennis Hill Road. Gary would like to see the Road Advisory Committee report handed out, as it's a very good analysis of the plan moving forward. He would also like to see the financial projections available for residents to see on a screen. Next step is to finalize the budget, so it reflects the changes just discussed.

The old town house was also discussed and needs to be added to the budget but the estimates need to come back so they know how much to ask for. Budget committee would like to hear the numbers of the undesignated surplus from Kelly as well.

5.0 **Unscheduled Business**

5.1

6.0 **Appointments/Resignations**

7.0 **Warrants**

7.1 Town Warrant #19 \$537,136.74 (of which \$402,366.37 is for RSU4)

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve town warrant #19 in the amount of \$537,136.74 (of which \$402,366.37 is for RSU4). This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.2 Town Payroll #20 \$35,780.27

There was a motion made by Tom P. to approve town payroll #20 in the amount of \$35,780.27. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Rick suggested culverts and bridges be added to the capital improvement plan so there is a list of all projects moving forward. Tom W. agrees and noted that this is hopefully in the works in the master plan.

8.2 Rick would like to know what the dollar amount to be used for capital improvements when looking at projects. He has asked for guidance from the Budget Committee when coming up with the high dollar amount for capital improvements. He's looking to identify holes in the budgetary documentation, such as the upkeep of the town office's parking lot or the Fire Station parking lot. The Select Board seems to agree with that plan. Tom W. agreed and said that the Budget Committee will take that on.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 New Mills Dam Grant

9.2 Web page upgrades

9.3 Gravel bid

10.0 Adjournment at 9:28 pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker and Kelly Weissenfels