

TOWN OF WARNER



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Select Board: Harry Seidel, Chairman
Alfred Hanson, Vice Chair
Michael J. Smith
Kathleen Frenette, Town Administrator

Select Board Public Work Session Minutes August 12, 2025 6:00 PM

A. Open the Public Meeting / Roll Call / Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Harry Seidel called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He stated that this is a work-session, there will not be public comment.

Select Board present: Chairman Harry Seidel, Vice Chair Alfred Hanson and Mike J. Smith.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. Select Board Business

1. Organize an interim framework for handling normal operational matters and communications.

Harry Seidel stated that the Town Administrator is on paid administrative leave. He stated that the Town needs to work efficiently as possible. Harry Seidel explained that for the Select Board there is a practical and legal issue with interoffice communication. He stated that there needs to be someone in the position who can forward emails to the other board members, handle phone calls and handle the overall communications. Harry Seidel explained that these responsibilities normally would fall on the Town Administrator. He stated that the Administrative Assistant is fully capable and dedicated to Town service. Harry Seidel stated that Judy Newman-Rogers is organized, thoughtful and experienced.

There was a conversation about how the audience member cannot hear the Select Board and the ways to improve that. James Gaffney made a point of order that documents are supposed to be available three days prior to the meeting, and the meeting was noticed on Sunday. Alfred Hanson assert the Select Board is trying to move forward and they are working very hard. Alfred Hanson stated that the Select Board has exciting news to announce. James Gaffney stated that the Select Board has an obligation to follow the law and the rules of procedure. Alfred Hanson and James Gaffney went back and forth. Alfred Hanson stated that he will not stand for being called a liar, James Gaffney asserts that he was not accurate. Harry Seidel reigned in the discussion.

Alfred Hanson is satisfied with how things are currently being handled in the absence of the Town Administrator. He is pleased with the amount of work that has been accomplished in the last week. Mike Smith stated that he would like all emails to be sent to his town email address and not his personal email.

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Mike Smith spoke about overtime, noting that while the Administrative Assistant was out there was no overtime and he expected that there would not be overtime now. Harry Seidel stated that it can be managed. Mike Smith explained that there are other employees who are interested in more hours and are available. Mike Smith stated that Chrissy Almanzar is also looking for additional hours. Harry Seidel noted that Eric Buck is interested in the welfare position. Alfred Hanson believes that the town has personnel in Town Hall to organize and conduct the business of the Town. Mike Smith agreed. Mike Smith stated that he supports utilizing current personnel. He is concerned about over taxing Elizabeth Labbe with more work. Alfred Hanson agreed.

1 Harry Seidel made a motion to use Judy Newman-Rogers to be the communication point of contact and let
2 her manage the operational responsibilities in Town Hall.
3 Mike Smith offered an amendment stipulating there will be no overtime. Alfred Hanson is not willing to
4 second the motion after the amendment was made.
5

6 Harry Seidel suggested revising the amendment to say minimize overtime. Mike Smith disputed the revision,
7 stressing that there was no overtime when the Administrative Assistant was out so there should be no reason
8 for it now. Harry Seidel stated that there could be times when overtime is necessary. Harry Seidel explained
9 that it is not realistic or practical to have an absolute that there will not be overtime. Mike Smith stated that
10 he was beaten up by the budget committee about overtime. Alfred Hanson acknowledged that overtime is a
11 concern but there was no way to foresee the current situation. Mike Smith stated that last year Alfred Hanson
12 was very much opposed to overtime and now he is not. Alfred Hanson reiterated that there was no way to
13 predict that the Town would be in the situation that it is in now. He stated that it is his preference not to use
14 overtime, but the Board will have to improvise. Mike Smith stated that there are employees who can fill in to
15 limit overtime, as was done for the last five months, and the Board voted for it.
16

17 Alfred Hanson stated that this is a new Board, and he thinks about things differently. He explained that there
18 are certain things that will be happening in the next few months that can either cost thousands of dollars to
19 fix or a minimal amount of money to fix it. Mike Smith stated that Alfred just wants to spend more money.
20 Alfred Hanson interjected, asking if that is what he said. Mike Smith stated that Alfred should stop
21 interrupting him and being rude. Mike Smith stressed that there needs to be some decorum and respect
22 between them.
23

24 Harry Seidel understands Mike Smith's position on overtime; he stated that he too wants to maintain the
25 budget. Harry Seidel would support an amendment to say, "work to minimize any overtime". He reiterated
26 that there could be a situation that calls for overtime. Harry Seidel recognizes that there are other employees
27 who can step in. Mike Smith stated that he is sick of the cronyism, favoritism and the good old boys club
28 because now someone who wants to do overtime and it will be approved. Harry Seidel and Alfred Hanson
29 disputed that statement. Harry Seidel asserted that they are not trying to give someone more work, they will
30 be spreading the work around. Harry Seidel does not support an iron clad no overtime.
31

32 Mike Smith stated there are other employees who are looking for more hours to work and they are not being
33 utilized. He explained that the line item is currently overspent by \$50,000. He stressed there is enough
34 spending. Harry Seidel stressed that he is not a spender. Mike Smith stated that he is thinking about the town
35 residents and the money that Harry keeps spending. Harry Seidel disputed that statement.
36

37 Alfred Hanson explained that he is fine with the original motion, he stated that he is fine with an amendment
38 that would limit overtime. He also supports spreading out the workload. Alfred Hanson does not agree with
39 cutting off all overtime. Harry Seidel supports spreading out the workload, he is reluctant to cutting off any
40 overtime. Mike Smith explained that it was done in the past by one person and now that Harry is Chairman
41 it is back to overspending. He stated that Mr. Hanson has flipped his position all of a sudden. Alfred Hanson
42 asserted that he has not flipped. Harry Seidel asked Mike Smith to refrain from making comments that are
43 derogatory or personal.
44

45 Mike Smith and Alfred Hanson had an intense exchange. Mike Smith told Alfred Hanson that he does not
46 scare or intimidate him, and the louder Mr. Hanson gets the louder he will get. Harry Seidel called for order.
47 Harry Seidel reiterated that he does not want to overburden one employee, and he supports spreading out the
48 workload. He is hesitant to have an absolute no overtime under any circumstances, but he thinks this can be

1 managed if they plan ahead. Harry Seidel offered to restate his motion and listen to Mike Smith's
2 amendment.

3
4 **Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to use Judy Newman-Rogers to be the**
5 **communication point of contact, let her manage the operational responsibilities in Town Hall and not**
6 **exceeding her regular hours. Roll Call Vote Smith YES Seidel YES Hanson NO**
7

8 Mike Smith stated the he is assuming that since Judy is present at this meeting she will adjust her hours to
9 account for time spent at this meeting. He suspects Judy will contact Chrissy Almanzar to cover her office.

10
11 2. Computer Purchases:

- 12 a. Town Clerk's office and Supervisors of the Checklist
13 b. Quotes from Culver Technologies

14 Harry Seidel announced that the computers have been purchased inexpensively thanks to Judy Newman-
15 Rogers, Dave (Culver ? Last name not stated) and Clyde Carson.

16
17 3. Auditor Search Committee (ASC) recommendations:

- 18 a. Discussion, mission statement to get an Auditor, clarification on focus.

19 Harry Seidel stated that he has given this a great deal of thought, and he is troubled by something. He
20 explained that at the July 17, 2025, Budget Committee meeting it was emphasized repeatedly that the Audit
21 Search Committee was to be independent from the Select Board, the Finance Director and the Town
22 Administrator. He noted that nearly everyone stated that except Mike Smith. Harry Seidel stated that speed
23 and efficiency were emphasized given the calendar. He stated that the purpose of the search committee as
24 Robert Blake stated at the meeting "the group will meet with auditing firms to convince them to take Warner
25 as a client". Harry Seidel stated that the opinions of one Selectmen have been influencing that committee and
26 he thinks the objective and focus of finding an auditing firm has been lost. Harry Seidel stated that the Town
27 does not have the luxury of conducting a deep investigation. He stated that the auditor's job is to point out
28 areas that need improvement. Harry Seidel stated next, he would like to go through the ASC
29 recommendations.

30
31 Alfred Hanson stated that he believes that they can do away with all of that after reading a document he was
32 given. Mike Smith opposed that, he asked if Alfred Hanson has a document that he does not have. Alfred
33 Hanson assured Mike Smith that he does have the document that he is referring to. Mike Smith stated that he
34 just received the document today and he is supposed to have the document three days in advance of the
35 meeting. Elizabeth Labbe stated that she just received it today. Mike Smith asserted that it should not be a
36 part of this meeting.

37
38 Mike Smith told Alfred Hanson that he has been adamant about following the rules and procedures, but he
39 only wants to follow them when they are good for him. Alfred Hanson asserted that the Select Board should
40 give Mr. Smith the three days and then see what he does. He stated that if Mr. Smith cared about the Town of
41 Warner, he would read the document tonight. Mike Smith stated that it is obvious that Mr. Hanson received
42 the document ahead of time. Alfred Hanson assured Mike Smith that they received the document at the same
43 time as they walked down the stairs to the meeting. Elizabeth Labbe reiterated that she just received the
44 document this evening. Alfred Hanson stated that the information in the document is exciting news for the
45 Town and very important for the town residents to know but Mike Smith wants to hold it up for three days.
46 Harry Seidel agreed that the information is good news for the Town of Warner.

47
48 Harry Seidel began reviewing the ASC recommendations stating that the first recommendation did not have
49 any action steps, just a recap of why the auditor withdrew. Mike Smith asked the Chair why this is being

1 revisited when it was previously discussed and voted on at a previous meeting. Harry Seidel acknowledged
2 that the Select Board did discuss and vote previously but they can reconsider their votes.

3
4 Harry Seidel stated that the ASC wanted a decision on their recommendations right away but after further
5 consideration there are some things that do not make sense to him. Mike Smith asked if Harry sent anything
6 to the ASC for clarification on what does not make sense to him. Alfred Hanson asked Harry Seidel to read
7 the motion that established the ASC. Mike Smith clarified that he is asking if Harry Seidel contacted the ASC
8 to discuss the areas that he would like to change. Harry Seidel stated that he did not.

9
10 Harry Seidel stated that he contacted the town's legal counsel for their opinion regarding granting James
11 Sherman full access to the town's financial records. Mike Smith explained that the Select Board agreed to sit
12 down as a Board and speak to legal counsel as a Board. Harry Seidel stated that he had tried to get that
13 scheduled but Mike Smith would not meet. Mike Smith stated that he was given 10 minutes notice. Harry
14 Seidel explained that he contacted the lawyers to find out when they would be available to speak with the
15 Board and he was told they were available now, which is why he contacted Mike Smith on short notice.
16 Harry Seidel stated that he often waits to hear back from Mike Smith, but he does not respond. Harry Seidel
17 stated that Mike Smith questions why things come to him at the last minute, and it is because Mike Smith
18 will not communicate with him. Mike Smith explained that he struggled with that when he was chair.

19
20 Harry Seidel explained that he has sent numerous emails to Mike Smith's town email that goes unanswered.
21 He stated that if he emailed Mike Smith's personal email he may have done that once as a response to an
22 email that Mike sent him. Mike Smith stated that he has only received one response email from Alfred
23 Hanson since he has been on the Board. Harry Seidel stressed the importance of the Select Board working
24 together. Mike Smith asserted that he does respond to emails quickly. Mike Smith told Harry Seidel not to
25 text him because he is not doing that. Harry Seidel stated that the Board's communications need
26 improvement. Mike Smith explained that there is one appropriate method of communication for the Select
27 Board: by town email only.

28
29 Mike Smith explained that the information Harry Seidel received independently from the town's attorney is
30 invalid because it was not done as a Board. Harry Seidel stated that the information is valid. Harry Seidel
31 stated that he and Mr. Smith have a different opinion on the matter and they will move on to the next
32 recommendation by the ASC.

33
34 Harry Seidel stated that the third recommendation was to hire a private CPA to assist the town to be prepared
35 for an audit. Harry Seidel explained that he finds this to be counterproductive and takes time that they do not
36 have. He stated that the fourth recommendation is realistic (to complete the MS232 by August 10th and the
37 MS737) both have been done. Harry Seidel stated that the Town is entirely compliant with the DRA. Harry
38 Seidel stated that the fifth recommendation is to investigate switching to a payroll service. He explained that
39 he feels this will be costly and disruptive.

40
41 Harry Seidel stated that the ASC has been helpful but most of the recommendations are not based on the
42 reality that Warner is actually a well-managed town and not as bad off as some people think it is. James
43 Gaffney stated the Select Board should ask the IRS.

44
45 Mike Smith spoke about a \$10,000 fine, wrong payroll, another fine and the wrong submittal of social
46 security numbers to the IRS, all could have been avoided by having a payroll service not to mention the
47 stress it would relieve from Clyde Carson. Mike Smith explained that the transition would not be expensive.
48 Mike Smith encouraged Harry Seidel to read the quotes provided by the software companies. He stated that

every department head supports the switch over. Mike Smith stated that one of the major audit findings were payroll problems.

Alfred Hanson spoke about the auditor's letter outlining the reasons for their withdrawal. He stated that there is one reason that sticks out to him and has nothing to do with 2022 or 2023. Mike Smith explained that the auditors read all of the Select Board meeting minutes from 2023 and 2024 to see what was done to correct the issues found in previous years audits. They discussed a questionnaire that the audit company sent the Board. Alfred Hanson asked if Mike Smith really read the questionnaire because there are multiple items that the auditors found to be in conflict. Alfred Hanson stressed that the Town of Warner has never been in this situation before. Alfred Hanson and Mike Smith had another intense exchange.

Harry Seidel called for order.

Harry Seidel explained that the auditor's concerns were related more to the working atmosphere in Town Hall than the financial situation of the Town. He explained that the auditors were not in town long enough to make a determination on the financial situation, it was the working atmosphere that caused them to withdraw. Harry Seidel stated that he has witnessed the negative working environment and heard the yelling. Harry Seidel stated that he can understand why they referred to the working atmosphere in their termination letter. He stated that it began last year, and it is not pleasant. Harry Seidel explained that it was not incoherence in the Finance Department.

Mike Smith strongly disagreed with that, explaining that the auditors said something right away. He stated that the auditors requested documentation, but it was not compiled and staff refused to give it to them. Harry Seidel disputed Mr. Smith's statement. Harry Seidel stated that they will move to the next agenda item. Mike Smith asked for clarification on the ASC recommendations. Alfred Hanson stated there has been a change and Mr. Smith should read the document that the Select Board received today.

4. Operating Budget 2026

Harry Seidel explained that Alfred Hanson has years of experience on the Budget Committee, and he has offered to spearhead this budget. Alfred Hanson offered to compile the 2026 operating budget to be ready for the Select Board to review before the presentation to the Budget Committee in September. He explained that he will gather all departments operating budgets. Mike Smith would appreciate receiving each of three previous years for each department. Mike Smith stated that Kathy Frenette had begun working on the operating budget and had received several budgets from Department Heads.

Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to give Alfred Hanson authority to prepare the 2026 operating budget for discussion and review by the Select Board. Roll Call Vote Seidel YES Smith YES Hanson YES

5. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Select Board discussed that they expect to receive the CIP from the Planning Board on August 19, 2025.

6. Other subjects that need attention

Alfred Hanson made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel that the Select Board Meetings be held on Tuesdays at 6:00 PM.

Discussion on the motion: Alfred Hanson explained that the biggest reason is to provide information to the public. He feels that waiting two weeks given the current climate in Warner is too long. Mike Smith stated that he will not be here weekly. Alfred Hanson feels that it is important to keep the town informed. Harry

1 Seidel advised the Select Board that he will be out of town on September 10-18th. Harry Seidel stated that he
2 is supportive of this change. He feels that it will shorten the length of the meetings. Mike Smith stated that he
3 has travel plans. He stated that he will not be here for weekly meetings. Mike Smith noted that the Select
4 Board is also committed to attending the Budget Committee meetings. Alfred Hanson explained that the
5 situation the Town is in right now warrants more frequent meetings. Mike Smith stated that the Select Board
6 members should be able to review the meeting packet in advance, form an opinion and participate in
7 discussion and make a decision. He feels that weekly meetings on top of the ex-officio meetings and the
8 upcoming Budget Committee meetings are an overload. He suggested having a meeting an hour before the
9 Budget Committee meetings. Harry Seidel stated that when signed up to be a Selectmen he knew the job
10 would be arduous. He stated that at this time of the year the Select Board has a lot to do. He feels that
11 meeting more frequently will improve the Select Board's efficiency.

12
13 Mike Smith suggested the Board members read their packet before coming to the meetings to improve
14 efficiency. He stated that it is unfair to tie someone down for weekly meetings when that was not what they
15 signed up for. He spoke about repeating items on the agenda meeting after meeting. He urged the Selectmen
16 to read the information and be prepared to vote.

17
18 Alfred Hanson pointed out that even with the two week meeting schedule as Mr. Smith wants, there are still
19 repeating items. Alfred Hanson feels the town would benefit from weekly meetings and get the information
20 out to the public. Mike Smith stated Mr. Hanson has postponed a vote numerous times because he needs
21 more time to make an educated decision. He explained that if he has not been prepared to vote it is because
22 he did not get the information or the correct agenda. He would appreciate it if focus was spent on getting the
23 agenda with paperwork on time the Select Board could efficiently do the job. Alfred Hanson explained that
24 he is trying to fulfill his obligation the best he can and getting the information out to the public every week
25 verses every two weeks.

26
27 Mike Smith stated that Harry Seidel and Alfred Hanson are making the Board's job harder. Harry Seidel
28 asked if Mike Smith is willing to participate by Zoom. Mike Smith refused to commit to Zoom participation.
29 Harry Seidel asked Mr. Smith if he factored in being away on vacation for 14 weeks. Mike Smith stated that
30 he only missed two meetings last year.

31
32 Alfred Hanson finds it hard to understand that Mike Smith will not allow the Select Board to announce some
33 good news because of Mike Smith. Mike Smith stressed that information should not be given to the Select
34 Board before a meeting expecting them to read it make a decision.

35
36 Alfred Hanson revised his motion.

37
38 **Alfred Hanson made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel that the Select Board meet every Tuesday at**
39 **6:00 PM for the next two months. Roll Call Vote Seidel YES Hanson YES Smith NO**

40
41 **C. Select Board Other Business**

42 -Harry Seidel stated that the health insurance renewal is coming up in October. Mike Smith asked for
43 clarification if he is leading the charge on the insurance renewal. The Select Board agreed that Mike Smith
44 will continue to gather information.

45 -Harry Seidel expressed concern that there are financial records and a personal file missing from the Finance
46 Department. The Select Board agreed to discuss that in non-public.

47 -Harry Seidel requested that the Select Board inform each other of any upcoming travel plans to allow the
48 Board to plan accordingly. Mike Smith stated that he is not willing to divulge his personal travel plans.

1 -Harry Seidel explained that the administrative evaluation form has been completed and will be distributed to
2 the Board.
3 -Mike Smith explained that he and Mr. Hanson may disagree but they both have the best interests of the town
4 at heart.
5 -Mike Smith stated that Mr. Seidel and Mr. Hanson still have three manifests that need to be voted on.
6 Judy Newman-Rogers stated that it is on the next regular meeting agenda.
7 -Mike Smith spoke about a form relating to the cell tower. He stated that he was contacted recently to
8 schedule a visitation. He explained that the form needs to be signed by the Select Board before they can
9 come. Mike Smith asked about available dates. Mike Smith stated that they want to get this going soon and
10 he stressed that this will be revenue for the town this year. He noted that the Fire, Police and DPW would
11 benefit from having this tower in place. Alfred Hanson questioned how many cell towers are permitted in
12 town. He stated this tower will be the third tower if approved. Mike Smith clarified that this is a form to
13 grant permission to access the property to conduct testing. Harry Seidel would like Mike Smith to have a
14 conversation with Tim Allen.
15 -Mike Smith asked if the letter has been sent regarding the Gibson property. Harry Seidel confirmed that the
16 letter was sent to Attorney Lick and the Gibsons.
17 -Mike Smith advised the Select Board that he would like an agenda item to be scheduled for the next Select
18 Board meeting to discuss Transfer Station stickers.
19 -Mike Smith explained that progress has been made regarding Pumkin Hill Road. He stated that they are
20 waiting for one more letter.
21 -Mike Smith asked if Carol Conforti-Adams is working for the town. Elizabeth Labbe explained that Carol is
22 meeting with residents. Alfred Hanson inquired if Eric Buck has been involved. Elizabeth Labbe explained
23 that Eric Buck worked closely with Peter Flynn. Mike Smith asked if the Select Board wanted him to look
24 into the options for the town.

25
26 **Alfred Hanson made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to authorize Mike Smith to research the**
27 **Welfare position. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel YES Smith YES**
28

29 Harry Seidel spoke highly of Carol Conforti-Adams strength and qualifications. Elizabeth Labbe echoed
30 Harry Seidel's comments. Mike Smith stated that he will look at the interested employees, Carol Conforti-
31 Adams and any other individual interested.

32
33 Elizabeth Labbe met with the independent solar contractor. She explained that he will provide a timeline for
34 what he has to do. She will provide her meeting notes if the Select Board would like. She advised the Select
35 Board that the proposal will be coming next week.

36
37 The Select Board discussed the Building Inspector position vacancy and the need to fill the position. The
38 Select Board agreed to discuss it at the next meeting.

39
40 **D. Non-Public Session (If needed, RSA 91-A:3II(a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,m))**
41 None

42
43 **E. Adjournment**
44 **Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to adjourn the meeting.**
45 **Roll Call Vote Smith YES Seidel YES Hanson YES**
46

47 The meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM.

48
49 Respectfully submitted on 8/13/25 by Tracy Doherty

DRAFT