

**Harpswell Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Thursday February 19, 2026
Harpswell Town Office
APPROVED 3-5-26**

This meeting was held in the Select Board Meeting room at the Town Office and was available remotely by Zoom. Instructions were included on the published agenda and on the Town's website. Links to a video recording of the meeting are also available on the Town's website.

Selectmen Present: Chairman Kevin E. Johnson; Selectman David I. Chipman; Selectman Matthew Gilley.

Staff Present: Kristi Eiane, Town Administrator; Terri Gaudet, Treasurer & Deputy Town Administrator; Tim Clark, Code Enforcement Officer.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

1. **Adoption of Agenda:** Approved with no changes.
2. **Acceptance of Heating Assistance Funds:** Kevin O'Kelley from Cook's Lobster & Ale House presented a gift of \$40,000 to the Town for the purpose of supporting Harpswell's Heating Assistance program. The funds were raised at Cook's Annual Auction & Fundraiser on December 6, 2025. O'Kelley thanked the many sponsors of the event and all those who attended and donated. The funds raised were far above the goal of \$25,000. The Select Board thanked Cook's owners and team and unanimously approved acceptance of the donation.
3. **Public Comment:** None
4. **Select Board Announcements:** None.
5. **Town Administrator's Report:** Kristi Eiane reminded the public that voters can cast absentee ballots for two referendum questions on the March 14 Town Meeting Warrant; as well as for open positions on the Select Board and School Board.
6. **Consent Agenda:** The Select Board unanimously approved: a) 2-5-26 Meeting Minutes; b) Payroll Warrant PR7 totaling \$27,869.95 and Payable Warrant 8 totaling \$203,635.89.
7. **Michael & Jennifer Rogers Wharf Application, East Shore Dr, Map 48, Lot 92-1:** Tim Clark asked the Select Board to consider an application for a new wharf on East Shore Drive. The Lot is empty right now and is not part of a subdivision. A site visit occurred the previous week with no objections noted. The new wharf meets all setback requirements and would not present any navigational hazards. The Select Board unanimously approved the application as the Harbormaster indicates there is no hazard to navigation and there is no injury to the rights of others.

8. Progress Report Re: Mitchell Field Boat Launch: Kevin Buruchian, GEI Consultants, provided an update on the progress of the Boat Launch project. The contractor set the last pre-set cast last week in anticipation of the planned winter shutdown. Work will pick up in the spring.

Buruchian informed the Select Board that he was able to negotiate a favorable deal with a contractor regarding the third-party testing of concrete. The Select Board had previously approved a change order worth \$20k to address this unexpected expense. The actual expense will be \$5k.

Selectman Gilley asked if the progress remained on schedule for spring launch. Buruchian indicated that it was.

Administrator Eiane asked about the large stockpile of soil at the site. Buruchian explained that much of this soil (taken from launch and road areas) will need to be tested before a determination is made as to its disposal. The pile will remain stockpiled for the moment and efforts to cover it will be made so as to keep it in place.

Administrator Eiane asked Mark Eyeran, the Town's project representative, to provide input on the status of the project. He stated it was actually ahead of schedule since work on the parking lot had been completed well ahead of plan.

9. Progress Report Re: Ocean Street Embankment: Will Haskell, Gorrill Palmer engineer, provided an update to the Select Board on the Ocean Street Embankment project. Haskell noted that he had presented an application to ME DEP for work at Ocean Street earlier in the day; and, was hopeful to get clearance from them in the coming weeks. With DEP approval, the Town would then be able to move ahead to solicit bids from contractors.

The damage to the Ocean Street embankment occurred during the powerful storms of January, 2024. Work to rebuild and fortify the area will be funded by FEMA. Although the storm damaged 200 feet of embankment, the work will address only 150 feet of this, the balance of the area being private. This does present engineering challenges since creative ways need to be determined that will ensure that the area will not be compromised by future wave action coming from the area not stabilized. Selectman Chipman encouraged the Town to establish communication with the private landowner at the site to determine if they might consider addressing their own portion of the embankment.

Mr. Haskell continued with a review of the details of the project and the proposed stabilization approach. A hybrid strategy will be employed that includes the use of both rip wrap and native vegetation to hold the soil. The stairs will be reconstructed for access to the shore. Access to the Giant Stairs trail from the Ocean Street side will likely be restricted during the month or so that the work is completed. The Select Board members commented that it might be best if this work could be scheduled after Labor Day to limit the impact on visitors.

10. Review of March 14, 2026 Town Meeting Draft Warrant: Administrator Eiane presented the Select Board with the latest draft of the Town Meeting Warrant.

Market & Other Budget Adjustments: The updated budget reflected adjustments made by the Treasurer and Town Administrator as identified by the Select Board during workshops. The new annual budget of \$8,202,588 represented a 4.78% increase over 2025. Adjustments included:

- Payroll adjustments for select positions in response to the competitive wage and benefit study.
- Payroll adjustments to reflect increases for employees with longevity of 5, 10, and 15 years.
- Increased expense for MMA membership.
- Reallocation of \$10k from the Emergency Services Building to the Facilities utility budget to address increases in propane usage at the Town Office.
- Increased expense for Cumberland County Dispatch services; a 6% increase in our annual contract (starting April 1) is now expected versus the original 3% expectation.
- A minor increase in funding to Midcoast Humane that was absorbed by the Departmental budget.

The Select Board unanimously approved the budget with Selectman abstaining from any recommendation regarding the Community TV Article. Selectman Gilley asked if the net impact in changes still kept the Town within LD1 guidelines. Deputy Administrator Gaudet said the budget is below LD1 by over \$100k.

Final Edits: Kristi Eiane asked the Select Board to consider and identify any other changes to the Warrant draft as soon as possible. The Warrant would be going to the printer tomorrow, although the Select Board would not actually vote to approve the Warrant until March 5. The Town Administrator asked the Select Board to confirm that it wished to establish 4% as the rate of interest for both tax delinquency, as well as tax abatements. The Select Board unanimously confirmed that 4% was the correct rate.

11. **Public Comment:** None.

12. **Other Business:** None.

13. **Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Hubbard
Recording Secretary

Attachments: None.

[Attachments are available at the Town Clerk's Office or by email at harpwell@town.harpwell.me.us]