

**Harpswell Board of Selectmen**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday April 2, 2026**  
**Harpswell Town Office**  
**APPROVED 4-23-26**

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 (via Zoom); Selectman David I. Chipman; Selectman Matthew Gilley.

**Staff Present:** Kristi Eiane, Town Administrator; Terri Gaudet, Treasurer & Deputy Town Administrator; Margaret McIntire, Town Planner; and Katie Neal, Recreation Director; Darcie Couture, Interim Harbormaster.

**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. **Public Comment:** None.
3. **Select Board Announcements:** Selectman Chipman reminded the public that placement of business advertisements alongside roadsides is not permitted; nor can they be affixed to utility poles – which are private property. Selectman Chipman stated the Town is still considering speed calming measures in response to a constituent that has complained about the continual speeding on Basin Point Road.
4. **Town Administrator's Report:** Administrator Eiane addressed the following topics:
  - **Heating Assistance Program Review** – Staff has been discussing possibly extending the Heating Assistance Program beyond April 15 but will come back to the Board with a possible recommendation. The Selectmen were receptive to this idea and will await further insight from Staff.
  - **Recycling Center Incident** – An accident with a backhoe at the Recycling Center caused over \$8,000 of damage to the electrical system. Electricians repaired the system and insurance (after a \$1,000 deductible) will cover \$7,128.41.
5. **Consent Agenda:** Selectman Gilley made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Selectman Chipman seconded. The Select Board unanimously approved the Motion 3-0.

The Motion included: a) approval of the 3-19-26 Select Board meeting minutes; b) appointment of Anthony C. Simmons as the Town's Alternate Plumbing Inspector; c) countersignature of the Warrant & Notice of Election Calling Maine Career & Technical Education Region 10 Referendum June 9, 2026; d) acceptance of a \$2,100 donation from the Maine Coast Heritage Trust; e) authorization of Payroll Warrant PR11 totaling \$30,989.05; f) authorization of Accounts Payable Warrant 12 totaling \$1,341,343.96.

6. **Marine Matters:** Darcie Couture, Interim Harbormaster, addressed two topics:

- **Removal of Abandoned Vessel:** There is some urgency to address the abandoned boat located at the

Town's Recycling Center. It needs to be disposed of before the busy season kicks off. The Select Board was asked to authorize the use of up to \$15,000 from the Marine Hazard Fund to get it permanently and safely removed. Selectman Gilley asked how much money was in the fund. Town Administrator Eiane indicated that there was currently \$20,000. Selectman Chipman made a Motion to approve the use of up to \$15,000 from the Marine Hazard Fund. Selectman Gilley seconded. The Motion was unanimously approved 3-0.

- ***Orr's Island Bridge Wharf Leases:*** Two leases at the Orr's Island Bridge are currently eligible for re-assignment through the lottery process designated in the Town Policy Manual. At a recent meeting, the Select Board approved an extension of the deadline for lottery applicants until the end of May. The Interim Harbormaster is now asking the Select Board to consider additional guidelines for identifying eligible applicants. For example, should only Harpswell residents be eligible for these leases? Or, should there be some consideration of non-residents with long-standing links to the Town?

Selectman Chipman suggested that there should be some flexibility given that housing affordability had forced some long-time commercial fisherman to live outside the town.

Town Administrator Eiane asked for clarity on the condition of the two wharves at these locations. Interim Harbormaster Couture indicated that one of the wharfs was in decent condition. The second wharf was virtually destroyed.

Chairman Johnson suggested that the Select Board meet the following week in a workshop to discuss and clarify guidelines for eligibility.

**7. 6:15 PM Public Hearing Re: Harpswell Collective, Inc. First-time Liquor License:** Chairman Johnson called to order a scheduled Public Hearing regarding a first-time applicant for a liquor license.

Administrator Eiane introduced Andrew Ziegler (applicant), the owner of a commercial property at the sea-side site of the old Estes Restaurant. Administrator Eiane indicated that the Town is required to hold a 'first time' hearing for a liquor license.

Andrew Ziegler provided background information. An application was submitted with the State designating his new entity as a "Club with Catering Privileges". The hours of operation listed in the application were 8 AM to 1 AM. The range of hours was done to maximize the potential uses of the facilities. To address abutters concerns about the length of hours, Mr. Ziegler indicated that it was not his intention to open a bar that would be open late every night. The facility would include retail space, an art gallery, and artists' studios; reflecting a vision of a prime 'creative' space that included ancillary entertainment, food and beverages. There would occasionally be private events scheduled for the space that might include Chef's Tables or small weddings.

The State's initial response to Ziegler's application was to ask that he re-categorize his site as a 'Restaurant'; thereby making it conform to a different set of regulations – including those with the Board of Health. The Town Administrator suggested that this might automatically re-start the clock on the application; which requires Town response within 60 days.

Administrator Eiane reported that Town staff was working with the applicant on issues related to its Planning Board approval; including parking, septic, hours of operation and other abutter concerns.

Ziegler addressed two of these issues – both unrelated to the liquor license. Septic plans allowed up to 75 people on the premises. And, the site was approved for up to 30 parking spaces to accommodate the retail shops. Larger events would require off-site parking and transportation services that they were still exploring.

The Deputy Town Administrator, Terri Gaudet, reminded the Select Board that the old Estes property originally operated with a metered overboard discharge permit that was restrictive; but that the property has since then installed an in-ground septic system across the street.

Administrator Eiane suggested that it may be premature to approve the license until further reviews were completed by Town staff.

Selectman Gilley asked if this meant that another public hearing would be required.

Administrator Eiane indicated that the public hearing opened tonight could be continued until the full review was complete. There is urgency to expedite the work, however, since applications are required to be addressed within sixty days of submission. Given that the application is now being re-submitted to the State with a new classification, timing may not be quite so compressed.

Ziegler indicated that there was still time to complete the process. The location was planned for a 'soft launch' on June 1.

Mary Ann Nahf, Bailey Island, asked a question about the hours of operation; expressing hope that the applicant would be more specific about how the location would be utilized and whether there would be typical requirements for winding down activity late at night.

Selectman Gilley made a Motion to continue the Public Hearing to a time and date to be determined. Selectman Chipman seconded. The Motion was unanimously approved 3-0.

- 8. Auditors Report on 2025 Financial Report:** Town Treasurer & Deputy Administrator, Terri Gaudet, introduced Heather Hunter, the Director of Audit from RHR Smith. RHR Smith conducts an annual audit of Town finances and the Town's Annual Financial Report. Hunter walked through a presentation of the highlights of the 2025 financial report. RHR Smith was pleased to say that there were "no suggested best practice improvements recommended for the Town of Harpswell." The full report – with the accompanying letter from RHR Smith – can be accessed from the Town's website under Financial Reports.
- 9. Consider Town Lands Committee Recommendation Re: Enforcement of Dog Rules:** Administrator Eiane introduced the topic of regulatory language for enforcing dog rules and assessing penalties for the violation of dog rules on Town properties. It was her understanding that the Town Lands Committee met recently and proposed two recommendations for the Select Board's consideration: 1) the Select Board place an article on the June ballot that would allow for full enforcement – including ticketing – of violations of the Town's existing dog rules; 2) the Select Board review the current rules to see if updates are needed, enlisting broad input from all sides.

With regard to the first recommendation, Town staff has been working in conjunction with legal counsel to draft language for the Board's consideration. If the Board is considering sending this matter to Town voters in June, the Board can make a final decision at its next meeting, which is currently scheduled for April 9.

With regard to the 2<sup>nd</sup> recommendation, the Select Board will need to give guidance on how it wishes to move forward with a review process. Previously, the Board established a Task Force to make recommendations regarding dog policy on Town properties.

Ken Oehmig, Town Lands Committee, spoke about concerns that were raised to their group about non-compliance with dog rules on Town lands; specifically, about encounters with dogs that were off-leash at

times and in places where that was not allowed.

Selectman Chipman emphasized his concerns about non-compliance, citing both the lack of enforcement and the often-confusing rules about when dogs were and were not allowed to be off leash.

Administrator Eiane reminded the public that the Town has an ordinance regarding dogs, which includes stipulations for control and leashing. The Town's ACO has full enforcement authority – including tickets – to uphold this ordinance. The issue being discussed is specific to the Town's policies for handling dogs on Town property (ie. Mitchell Field, Cliff Trail).

Chairman Johnson suggested a workshop with the Town Lands and Recreation Committees to review these matters. Johnson emphasized, however, that personally he continues to believe that dogs should be on leash at all times. Selectman Gilley agreed.

Katie Neal, Director of Recreation, said that her team added signage about dog rules and leash requirements throughout Cliff Trail, which is the source of much of the concerns. The current policies were developed by a Task Force set up six years ago. The Town has changed since that time, suggesting the potential need for new public input and research. Cameras were installed at Cliff Trail that allowed the Town to monitor and evaluate compliance. The data indicated that 85% of Trail users were compliant with rules regarding leashes. Neal encouraged the Select Board to be thoughtful about what we are hearing from the public, to ensure that our understanding is not overly influenced by a few voices; it was critical to allow for broader public input before changes were made. The Recreation Director also emphasized that there seemed to be a unique issue at Cliff Trail that might dictate a focus on that area first.

Selectman Chipman said that he understood the feedback from the Recreation Director, but was concerned that another summer season is coming up and that action was needed; emphasizing that we can't keep doing what we are doing.

Recreation Director Neal reminded the Select Board that a recent survey of residents suggested support for a full leash law on Town properties, but the number of respondents was limited. Her concern was to ensure that we were getting broad public input.

Ken Oehmig emphasized that the Land Committee's immediate focus for June was on the first recommendation; strengthening the enforceability of the existing policies.

Chairman Johnson asked if the Select Board were in a position to strengthen enforcement without a community vote. Administrator Eiane indicated that any new enforcement mechanisms related to rules on Town properties would require a vote.

Ned Simmons, Harpswell resident, questioned the data that came out of the use of the cameras on the Cliff Trail. He also suggested that input to the Taskforce survey was not that limited, involving 400 people. And, he questioned whether public opinion should be weighted so heavily in a situation where residents were being bitten and injured. The current policies mixing full leash and non-leash were set up only as a trial six years and the results were surely not positive.

Selectman Chipman said that Harpswell needed to consider approaches taken by surrounding towns, who had full leash laws, coupled with the establishment of public dog parks.

Recreation Director Neal reminded the Select Board that there are other public trails – not owned by the Town – that do allow dogs to be off leash. These are owned by the Land Trust. So, any new restrictions added to Town Lands (ie Cliff Trail) would not necessarily deprive dog owners of venues to go off leash.

Selectman Gilley agreed with the Recreation Director, which he felt further lent credence to focusing on the acute issue at the Cliff Trail.

Rob Ryan, Harpswell, shared personal encounters he has had with dogs, but asked the Select Board to consider policy changes (full leash law) for reasons beyond public safety. With a background in Forestry and Ecology, Ryan believed that the impact of dogs roaming off leash to disturb ground nesting birds is extensive.

Chairman Johnson asked the Select Board members and Town staff how they wanted to proceed.

Administrator Eiane asked the Select Board members how they liked the language that had been drafted regarding enforceability.

Selectman Gilley indicated that he liked the language, but wondered if it could be adapted to expand the Board's flexibility to authorize additional individuals to write tickets as became necessary.

Chairman Johnson made a Motion to table the discussion for a week, so the members could fully digest the new language. The Motion was approved 3-0.

**10. Harpswell Community Broadcast Corporation Re: Capital Equipment Request:** Administrator Eiane reminded the Select Board that Town Meeting in 2023 approved the use of \$90k for upgrading communications equipment. \$50k was set aside for the Town Office to upgrade equipment for improved broadcasting/recording of official meetings. This funding was spent towards this goal. An additional \$40k was set aside for modernization of equipment at Harpswell Community TV, Inc. The Select Board is now asked to consider authorizing the use of these funds. The Town expects to be reimbursed by Comcast over a period of ten years (\$10k payments) once a new franchise agreement is signed.

Selectman Gilley asked why it has taken three years for the funds to be requested. Selectman Chipman took to the podium and spoke from his management role at HCTV, indicating that many decisions needed to be made before HCTV was in a position to make the request, but that we were now ready. Donna Chipman, Station Manager at HCTV, reinforced this idea, indicating that HCTV really needed the Town Office to complete its investments before it could properly determine what would be needed to be in sync.

Selectman Gilley made a Motion to approve the use of the funding. Chairman Johnson seconded. The Motion was approved unanimously 2-0 with Selectman Chipman recusing himself.

**11. Letter of Support for LD 2232: To Increase State Funding of County Jails:** Administrator Eiane asked the Select Board to sign a letter to Senate President Daughtry that supports LD2232, a bill that would increase budgetary support for the Cumberland County Jail. CCJ has seen increasing demand for its services at a time when budgetary resources have been declining. Selectman Gilley made a Motion for the Select Board members to sign the letter. Selectman Chipman seconded. The Motion was passed unanimously 3-0.

**12. Public Comment:** None.

**13. Other Business:** None.

**14. Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 7:43 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](mailto:harpwell@town.harpwell.me.us)]