

Harpswell Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Thursday May 7, 2026
Harpswell Town Office
APPROVED 5-21-26

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; Mike Drake, Fire Administrator; Katie Neal, Recreation Director.

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

1. Adoption of Agenda: The Select Board confirmed there were no additions or changes.

2. Public Comment:

- **Legislative Recognition:** State Representative Cheryl Golek recognized Don Miskill for decades of service to Harpswell, highlighting his foundational role in the Recreation program, long-term stewardship of Mitchell Field and contributions through mentorship, trail maintenance and public service.

Select Board members shared their own personal anecdotes illustrating Miskill's lasting impact, noting his influence across generations; including teaching residents to swim and supporting youth sports.

- **Recreation Updates:** Katie Neal, Recreation Director, provided updates on various programs as the summer season approaches. The Summer Swim Program is slated to be re-started and there remains a need for instructors and volunteers to support it. A new Mitchell Field Wildlife Walk has opened to the public. Trufant Summerton Field has undergone a number of improvements thanks to generous volunteer and contractor contributions.

- **Roadside Cleanup:** Selectman Chipman reported that the annual John Gillum roadside clean-up day was a success. Over 1,540 pounds of trash was collected.

3. Select Board Announcements: Chairman Johnson announced that the Select Board was appointing **Darcie Couture as the new, permanent, full-time Harbormaster for the Town of Harpswell** with an annual salary of \$67,000. Four applicants had been considered and interviewed, making up a strong candidate pool. Couture's science background was cited as particularly valuable given the increasing environmental and regulatory complexity facing a community like Harpswell. This, in addition to her experience with the job, made her a compelling candidate.

Clark Cove Management: Selectman Gilley reported that initial coordination work with the State was underway concerning the Town's management of the Clark Cove State conservation area. Authorization for the Town to enter into a management role over that property was approved by voters at Town Meeting. Selectman Gilley emphasized that no active marketing campaigns or promotions would be planned and that the site would remain low-impact. This is in direct response to concerns from local residents about overuse.

4. **Town Administrator's Report:** Administrator Eiane asked the Select Board to authorize the hire of Lori Fish to a full-time role at the Recycling Center. Selectman Chipman moved to approve the hire. Selectman Gilley seconded. Motion was unanimously approved, 3-0.
5. **Consent Agenda:** Selectman Gilley made a Motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including: a) the attached monthly financial report of Town Treasurer Gaudet; b) authorization of Accounts Payable Warrant 19 totaling \$1,005,142.46; c) authorization of Payroll Warrant PR18 totaling \$31,547.40. The Motion was seconded by Selectman Chipman and unanimously approved 3-0.
6. **Mitchell Field Update:** Don Miskill, Mitchell Field Steward, provided an update on Mitchell Field:
 - **Projects:** The boat launch is near completion and grand opening preparations are underway. Finishing work on the area where the Administrative Building was removed is ongoing. Bids are going out for finishing landscaping since the work will cost greater than \$5,000. Work on an updated master plan for Mitchell Field was continuing and all meeting minutes have been sent to the Town Office for posting. A coastal erosion study was pending a final report. Summer event planning is progressing.

- **Traffic Pattern Proposal:** An updated plan was shared regarding a proposed new traffic pattern for Mitchell Field - in the wake of project completions. The plan seeks to separate boat launch users, beach visitors, hikers and commercial shellfish operations in the most effective way possible. One-way traffic configurations are recommended and signage-based (non-permanent) implementations identified. There were safety concerns that prompted the consideration of a new traffic pattern including: The Lower Meadow Road is too narrow for safe two-way boat traffic as originally planned; avoiding crossing vehicle patterns; and flexibility in the plan and temporary (signs and sawhorses) to allow for changes.

Select Board members communicated general support for the concept proposed but delayed approval until the next meeting. The plan will be evolving and subject to ongoing review and on-site evaluation.

7. **Mooring Fees/Late Fee Recommendation:** Harbormaster Darcie Couture asked the Select Board to authorize a 60-day grace period for payment of current mooring fees. Technical issues with the mooring software have affected billing. This action is framed as equitable relief for residents. The Select Board supported this "good faith effort" to ensure compliance fairness. Selectman Chipman moved to authorize the 60-day grace period on mooring payments. Selectman Gilley seconded. The Motion was unanimously approved.
8. **Re-naming Recreation Department:** Katie Neal, Recreation Director, asked the Select Board to consider renaming her Department "Parks, Recreation & Community Services". The new title would more accurately reflect the expanded scope of her Department's work. As Harpswell continues to grow, the new name would better align with efforts to collaborate with Lands, Mitchell Field and Recreation Committees.

The Select Board members indicated their support for aligning Department names with actual responsibilities. Selectman Chipman moved to rename the Department to '**Parks, Recreation & Community Services.**' Selectman Gilley seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved, 3-0 with all members present voting 'yes'.

The Select Board members also unanimously supported a request from the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust to use Mitchell Field for up to 40 parking slots for an upcoming event.

The Recreation Director provided an update on a proposal to place a bench at Devil's Back. A procedural question was raised and the Select Board members asked that the request be referred back to the Lands Committee for review. Administrator Eiane noted that final acceptance will require Town Meeting vote

due to the value involved.

9. 6:30 PM PUBLIC HEARING Re: June 9 Municipal Ballot: Chairman Johnson opened a scheduled Public Hearing regarding amendments to the Town's Animal Control Ordinance. The amendments clarify Select Board authority over rule-making on Town property; expands the Town's enforcement authority; and, allows for fines for violations of the Ordinance. No public input was tendered. Chairman Johnson closed the Public Hearing at 6:37 PM.

10. Requests for Proposals for Comprehensive Plan Implementation Consultant: Town Planner McIntire asked the Select Board for authorization to issue an RFP for consultant services; that supports the Town's implementation of the recently approved Comprehensive Plan. Grants are available from the State to support municipalities making necessary changes to their Ordinances in order to comply with recent State legislation. Selectman Chipman moved that the Town issue the RFP as drafted by Staff in order to solicit consultant services and to give the Town Administrator authorization to sign off. Selectman Gilley seconded. Motion was passed unanimously 3-0.

11. Deed of Gift Form Re: Photographs: Administrator Eiane asked the Select Board to accept the donation of three photographs from David Etnier; with an approximate value of \$2,400. Selectman Chipman moved to accept the donation. Selectman Gilley seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

12. Emergency Services Building: Bond Anticipation Note Financing & Property Survey: Deputy Administrator & Treasurer Gaudet asked the Select Board to authorize the release of an Invitation to Bid for a General Obligation Bond Anticipation Note in an amount up to \$1,000,000. This financing will provide interim funding for the new central Emergency Services Building until permanent financing is secured.

Administrator Eiane reported that there were delays in the project, as well as uncertainty surrounding federal funding and environmental permitting timelines. This led to the delay in seeking the financing this spring. The Select Board emphasized the need for financial flexibility as questions were answered. Selectman Chipman moved to authorize the release of the Bid Invitation for up to \$1,000,000. Selectman Gilley seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Administrator Eiane went on to ask the Select Board to approve an expedited topographic survey of the land where the new building will be built. The cost will be around \$9,500 and take 2-3 weeks to complete. A lower cost option is available but would involve delaying the timeline of the project by 6-7 weeks. The Select Board discussed and leaned toward maintaining project momentum. Selectman Chipman moved to approve the expedited topographic study for \$9,500. Selectman Gilley seconded. Motion was unanimously approved with the condition that the company confirm its timeline.

13. Committee Appointments & CPI Mission: Deputy Administrator Gaudet reported on recent committee applications. The Select Board made the following appointments: Jane Meseinbach to the Budget Advisory Committee; Jack Wilson to the Energy & Technology Committee and the Recreation Committee; Chris Heinig to the Recycling Committee; Dan Kravitz to the Town Lands Committee.

Administrator Eiane then asked the Select Board to adopt the draft of a mission statement for the newly-constituted Committee overseeing implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Select Board discussed the role of the Committee as an oversight body, as well as an active policy development group. They emphasized their desire to recruit new participants from diverse backgrounds and geographies within the Town. Selectman Chipman moved to adopt the Committee's mission statement as drafted. Selectman Gilley seconded. The Motion was unanimously approved.

14. Grant Application for Lookout Point Landing: Mary Ann Nahf, Chair of the Town’s Resiliency and Sustainability Committee, asked for the Select Board’s support for a project to complete engineering designs and construct improvements to Lookout Point Town Landing, boat launch and adjoining Town property. The boat ramp and much of the parking area is at a low point and subject to flooding a few times a year. The increasing frequency and severity of storms continue to lead to deterioration of the boat ramp, roadbed and surrounding area. The R&S Committee is working to secure funding through Maine DOT’s Maine Infrastructure Adaption Fund for the work, but will need to include some matching funds from the Town. Specifically, the Committee is asking the Select Board to authorize the grant application and to approve the use of up to \$50,000 of matching funds from SPIRA funds (currently \$87,000 in uncommitted funds in that account).

The original proposal for work at Lookout Point focused on raising the elevation of the road. The current proposal focuses on ramp resiliency, allowing for periodic flooding rather than resisting it. This came out of concerns about wave energy impact and erosion patterns, leading to the consideration of “soft armoring” techniques.

The Select Board members discussed the question of a public investment leading to private benefits for adjacent property owners. Selectman Chipman suggested that private landowners that will benefit from the work be asked to chip in to the funding.

Selectman Chipman moved to approve the grant application and authorize up to \$50,000 in SPIRA funds to be used to meet the grant’s 5% matching requirement; with signing authority for the application granted to the Town Administrator. Selectman Gilley seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

15. Maine Municipal Association Legislative Policy Committee Appointment: Selectman Chipman nominated Selectman Gilley to act as the Town’s representative on the MMA Legislative Policy Committee for the coming year. Chairman Johnson seconded. The nomination was unanimously approved.

16. Public Comment: Chris Coffin, Harpswell, raised concerns about parking restrictions affecting seasonal visitors; specifically duck hunters. The economic impact on local businesses was cited and Cumberland County Sherriff’s enforcement approach as overly strict. He also questioned the survey practices and property recordkeeping practices being used by the Revaluation Assessing team. The Select Board acknowledged the concerns.

17. Other Business: Deputy Town Administrator Gaudet asked the Select Board to sign three leases for wharf locations at the Orr’s Island Bridge.

18. Executive Session Pursuant to 1 MRS 405(6)(A) Re: Personnel Evaluation: Chairman Johnson made a Motion for the Select Board to enter in to Executive Session pursuant to 1 MRSA 405(6)(A). Selectman Chipman seconded. The Motion was unanimously approved.

19. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned following Executive Session at 7:18 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Hubbard
Recording Secretary
w/ AI assistance

Attachments: Treasurers Report

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