

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Monday, January 12, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.
Killingworth Town Hall/Remote Access Available**

BOS Members in Attendance: First Selectman Eric Couture, Selectmen Nancy Gorski and Joel D’Angelo

BOS Members Absent: None.

Staff in Attendance: Regina Regolo (Director of Finance/Via Remote), Elizabeth Disbrow (Executive Assistant to First Selectman), and Jamie Sciascia (Clerk/Via Remote)

Visitors: Eileen Blewett, Kathy Amaio, Mark Albrecht, Jackie Vece (Via Remote), Lisa Connelly (BOE), Richard Pleines (Via Remote)

Called to Order: First Selectman Couture called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion #1 - Selectman Gorski *Moved* and Selectman D’Angelo *Seconded* a motion to approve the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board of the Selectmen that was held on Monday, December 22, 2025 as presented.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Refunds, Abatements and Transfers:

Motion #2 - Selectman Gorski *Moved* and Selectman D’Angelo *Seconded* a motion to approve the following Refunds, Abatements and Transfers as presented.

Refunds -

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Reason</u>
1. Nissan Motors	18 Surrey Ridge	\$55.58	COC#51648
2. CCAP	1601 Elm Street	\$114.54	COC#51017
3. James Kaiser	4 Old Mine Road	\$5.02	COC#53418
4. Nissan Motor	PO Box 22059	\$601.09	COC#54889

Transfers -

Paulo Duhl to Marianela Torres
36 Kenilworth Dr.
\$175,000

Timothy R. & Mary P. Garrelts to Ryan A. Derry & Rachel W. Szabo
8 Linnea Lane
\$815,000

Michael J. & Theresa Reilly to 208 Route 80 LLC
208 Route 80
\$400,000

Jean Helen Godfrey to Mary Minow
16 Bridlepath Trail
\$100,000

Sun Home Services to Debra Haburay
2 Swan Lake Trail
\$274,995

Gina M. Austyn to Tammy L. Reinhardt
8 Livemore Trail
\$120,000

Timothy P. & Robin Faircloth to Daniel M. & Melissa M. Sherrin
37 Titus Coan Road
\$720,000

Michael P. & Suzanne K. Langer to Christopher Bianchi
44 Swan Lake Trail
\$124,000

Christopher Courtright to Kevin J. & Nicole Grechika
12 Rachels Court
\$650,000

Bonwill Enterprises LLC to Stuart B. Munro Jr. & Oksana Morhach-Munro
38 Buell Hill Road
\$1,025,000

Samantha E. Grass to Robert D. & Alicia A. Garstka
8 Route 148
\$700,000

Steven J. & Cynthia A. Fetteroll to Nicholas R. Sharkey & Allison Parente
48 Bar Gate Trail
\$699,000

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Department Reports:

First Selectman Couture reported that activity in the Building Department has slowed seasonally, with a noticeable decline in solar permits due to changes in solar subsidies. Couture noted that the new permitting software is expected to come online soon, with most issues resolved without additional cost. Approximately 95% of the problems were addressed, and remaining contracted hours were redirected toward training and developing permit documentation. The new system will apply to new building permits, while existing permits will continue to be processed under the current paper-based system.

A. Board of Education:

Lisa Connelly, Vice-Chair of the Board of Education, presented the RSD17 Board of Education Summary for the month of December 2025. She reported on the following: 1) New Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent were introduced (Dr. Sullivan-Kowalski as the new Superintendent and Jennifer McCurdy as the new Assistant Superintendent); 2) New Board Members (Kelly Haeckel, Tara Amatrudo, and Matthew Riggs); 3) Cougar Pride; 4) Student Representative Report by Evan Berardino who shared several upcoming events at HKHS: Alumni Day – January 7th, Elective Fair – January 7th, Holiday Telethon – December 23rd; 5) Superintendent’s Report; 6) HKHS Building Project Update: The project timeline includes the following milestones: December 18th - Refined option presented to the Feasibility Study Team, January 8th - Cost estimate review, January 22nd -Selection of a proposal for public presentation, January 24th - Public Input Meeting; 7) Approval of the Ed Specs for the HKHS Project; 8) Executive Board Election - The Board elected the following officers: Board Chair - Heather Pach, Vice-Chair - Lisa Connelly, Treasurer - Shawna Goldfarb and Secretary - Sonja Charpentier; 9) Board Subcommittees and Schedules.

Board of Education information and past updates are available at:

<https://www.rsd17.org/district/board-of-education>

Information about the HKHS Project and Facility/Study Team is available at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/hkhsproject>

Selectman Gorski requested a separate meeting with Vice-Chair Connelly and Chair Pach to review the Board of Education’s Budget Priorities for the upcoming season, provide an overview of the recently approved administrative contract, and discuss upcoming contract negotiations for 2026–2027. Gorski emphasized the need for the Board of Selectmen, and potentially the Board of Finance, to fully understand these priorities and be prepared to participate in future negotiations. Connelly confirmed the meeting could be arranged in addition to the already scheduled Board of Finance, Selectmen, and Board of Education meetings. Couture noted he would coordinate with her and Chair Pach to schedule a suitable time.

Appointments:

The Board reviewed reappointments for members who were not sworn in within 30 days, including mostly existing members and one new appointment to the Committee on Aging, which was addressed separately. Discussion focused on the Open Space and SustainableCT Committees, both of which have had limited activity and participation. Open Space has not met in years, has no meaningful budget, and much of its work has been assumed by the Killingworth Land Trust, raising questions about whether the committee should continue in its current form. SustainableCT also faces engagement and representation challenges, though there is continued interest due to regional waste issues and potential legislative changes. The Board expressed concern about reappointing inactive members and agreed further evaluation is needed, particularly given charter requirements.

Motion #3 - Selectman Gorski **Moved** and Selectman D'Angelo **Seconded** a motion to appoint James W. Fulmer (D) and Stephanie Warren (D) to the Conservation Commission for a term ending on 12/31/28.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Motion #4 - Selectman D'Angelo **Moved** and Selectman Gorski **Seconded** a motion to appoint Rosalyn S. Reeps (D) to the SustainableCT Team for a term ending on 12/31/26.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Motion #5 - Selectman Gorski **Moved** and Selectman D'Angelo **Seconded** a motion to appoint James R. McDonald (D) and Benjamin A. Sodergren (D) to the Health & Safety Committee for a term ending on 12/31/26.

Discussion - First Selectman Couture noted that the committee is required by two union contracts and therefore does not fall under the normal rules for minority representation.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Motion #6 - Selectman D'Angelo **Moved** and Selectman Gorski **Seconded** a motion to appoint Bruce E. Dodson to the Historic Review Committee for a term ending on 12/31/26.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Motion #7 - Selectman Gorski **Moved** and First Selectman Couture **Seconded** a motion to appoint Christopher David Swiss (R) to the Park and Recreation Commission for a term ending on 12/31/28.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Motion #8 - First Selectman Couture **Moved** and Selectman D'Angelo **Seconded** a motion to

appoint Stephanie Warren (D), Aaron M. Dollar, and Timothy Francis Emerson (U) to the Open Space Committee for a term ending on 12/31/26.

Discussion - Selectman Gorski asked whether this could be tabled until more information is available.

First Selectman Couture **Rescinded** his motion and **Tabled** the item for a future Board meeting.

Motion #9 - Selectman Gorski **Moved** and Selectman D'Angelo **Seconded** a motion to appoint Tage A. Carlson to the Emergency Management Team for a term ending on 12/31/26.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Motion #10 - First Selectman Couture **Moved** and Selectman D'Angelo **Seconded** a motion to appoint Lucy M. Kinnane (R) to the Committee on Aging for a term ending on 12/31/27.

Discussion - First Selectman Couture noted that Lucy is a new individual who had already agreed to serve. Unfortunately, Margaret Tobelman has chosen not to serve again.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Budget Report:

First Selectman Couture reported that Director of Finance Regolo sent out the Budget Reports earlier this month. Selectman Gorski inquired about staffing and expenditures in the Assessor's Office, noting that in addition to the Assessor and the Assessor's clerk, a consultant is also participating in the revaluation work, and inquiring why the consultant's costs appear to be split between funding lines seeking clarification on how those expenses are allocated. Regolo explained that the Assessor's mileage expenses are charged to the operating budget, while revaluation related work hours are charged to capital. Couture reported that the town is just beginning the electronic revaluation, which will be a major project for the year. The work is expected to be completed in early October, with the final grand list issued by January 31st of next year. Property owners will be notified that the revaluation is underway in late winter or early spring, and notices of new assessments are expected to be sent in December or early January. Although the process is primarily electronic, it will also include statistical analysis and limited in-person inspections on a sample basis rather than visits to every property.

Old Business:

A. KES POET System Project - Water Tank Change Order

First Selectman Couture updated the Board on the KES POET System Water Tank Change Order, explaining that the condition and location of the tank were uncertain at the outset of the project and that a related change order was anticipated and included in the original state financing. The work did not require competitive bidding, as it fell under the existing contract and state requirements. While full tank replacement was ultimately unnecessary, extensive flushing and repeated testing were required after poor water samples, which resulted in a tanker with 6,000 gallons of water remaining on site for several months and drove up costs. GZA reviewed the expenses and found them acceptable.

Motion #11 - First Selectman Couture **Moved** and Selectman Gorski **Seconded** a motion to accept the Change Order Request #1 for the KES Poet System as presented.

Selectman Gorski stated that the motion should clearly note the requested amount of \$91,794.83, as it is significant.

First Selectman Couture **Amended** his motion to accept the Change Order Request #1 for the KES Poet System in the amount of \$91,794.83 as presented.

Discussion - Selectman Gorski questioned whether the significant amount required Town Meeting approval. First Selectman Couture responded that approval was not required, as the project financing included a \$100,000 allowance for this work. Couture also noted that poor water samples required a tanker with 6,000 gallons of water to remain on site for two months.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that \$92,000 is a significant amount and expressed concern about the size and accumulation of change orders, referencing a \$77,500 GZA change order from July. Selectman Gorski inquired about GZA's original quote for the KES project and the number of change orders executed to date.

Couture noted that the KES and Town Hall systems were budgeted separately. Director of Finance Regolo reported that GZA's total contract and change orders equal \$162,500 and that Snyder Construction's contract and Change Order No. 1 total \$402,995, for a combined total of approximately \$565,495. No costs have yet been incurred for Town Hall. Couture confirmed that the KES system is operational.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

New Business:

A. 26/27 Budget Priorities

First Selectman Couture presented a draft of the FY 2026/2027 Budget Priorities for Board review, noting it reflects unfunded mandates, administrative workload, and staffing needs, and is organized by high, medium, and low priority. High priorities included anticipated PFAS-related operating and capital costs, completion of digital permitting and budget software implementation, acquisition of asset management software, and resuming firehouse architectural planning for long-term emergency services. Mid-priority included consideration of a second state trooper position. Low-priority items included contract support for digital software management, subsidized economic development consulting through RiverCOG, and consideration of a half-time Finance and Land Use position for reporting and tracking needs.

Motion #12 - Selectman Gorski **Moved** and Selectman D'Angelo **Seconded** a motion to approve the quote from ProfExt (Pest Control Service, Professional Exterminating), as presented.

Discussion - Selectman Gorski inquired about the funding source for the extermination expense. Couture noted that there is no specific budget line for extermination, as costs are currently distributed among various location based accounts. The expense will be tracked under general maintenance, with discussion that it may be appropriate to establish a dedicated extermination line item in the future.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

B. Waste Management Update:

First Selectman Couture reported that MIRA has ceased operations following legislative action, and for the past six months, the Town has continued to send solid waste to the Essex Transfer Station under an agreement with the operator, which has functioned without issue.

Couture further noted that Regional discussions are ongoing among municipal leaders regarding future waste disposal options, including the possibility of forming a regional waste authority to negotiate collectively. Couture explained that the current transfer station operator must apply for appropriate state permits to continue operating independently, as reliance on the Town of Essex's permits expires on June 30, 2027. Couture provided background on the long-standing challenges with waste disposal in the state, noting that Connecticut exports a significant portion of its waste out of state. Couture stated that waste management costs are not expected to increase significantly in the upcoming budget year.

Public Comment:

- Kathy Amaio commented on the upcoming 2027 revaluation and its potential impact on the 2027–28 tax budget, highlighting the financial challenges faced by residents of manufactured home communities like Beachwood. Many residents do not own the land their homes sit on, face annual rent increases up to \$598/month, and incur higher maintenance costs due to aging homes and infrastructure. Some homes cannot be moved without destruction and are now out of warranty, requiring repeated repairs to systems such as heating units.

Ms. Amaio further stated that standard property valuation does not account for these factors, making assessments inequitable compared to homes on owned land. As a result, some residents struggle to remain in their homes or abandon them because they cannot sell at fair value, with high property tax re-evaluations compounding the burden.

Ms. Amaio emphasized the urgent need for a Fair Rent Commission to provide relief and protections for these residents and also stated that immediate attention is required to prevent displacement and ensure housing stability in the community.

- Richard Pleines commented that OpenGov now includes a Public Works tracking module and suggested the town consider using it, depending on whether the department is large enough to implement it effectively. Couture noted that the town is already aware of this feature and has been considering it for asset management.

- Eileen Blewett commented on several items: 1) Blewett gave an update on the KWO Pantry reporting that during the 2025 calendar year, the pantry received \$19,020.62 in cash donations, served 12,166 clients, and distributed 27,312 pounds of food, including 19,483 pounds donated. The pantry spent \$14,053 on food and \$198 on supplies and will enter 2026 with \$23,560 for operations. She emphasized that the pantry is fully supported by community donations rather than town funds, highlighted careful management of donations, including sharing excess with neighboring pantries, and acknowledged the contributions of volunteers, while noting a slight decrease in clients served compared to the previous year.
- 2) Blewett discussed ongoing water issues at the KES water system that delayed operation of the new system, including the extended use of a temporary water tank for about two months. The delays were due to water quality concerns identified through the school's routine testing. Eileen asked for clarification on whether this delay was a school issue or system-related.
 Selectman Gorski and First Selectman Couture discussed the KES water tank, noting that it required flushing to remove potential PFAS contamination. They explained that the flushing was also part of testing the new water system to clear residual materials. Additionally, the tank serves as part of the school's fire suppression system, so it must remain filled at all times.
- 3) Blewett addressed the recent discussion about the \$25,000 allocation to the Friendly Fund expressing support for the fund but noted that, similar to the pantry, community donations are typically generous and often sufficient without using taxpayer money. Blewett suggested that before quickly using the town's general fund, there could have been a more organized community appeal or push for donations, since the fund has historically been supported by the community. Blewett emphasized that while allocating funds is not opposed, engaging the community first would have been preferable.

Selectmen's Comments:

Nancy Gorski -

- Gorski thanked Eileen Blewett and acknowledged the work of the KWO and donors to the Friendly Fund.

- Gorski highlighted the financial challenges faced by residents, particularly in Beachwood and Evergreen, including high rent burdens and home valuations, emphasizing the importance of establishing the Fair Rent Commission. She referenced case studies, ongoing litigation, and noted coordination with staff and local officials, including Bill Joyce, Chris Aniskovich, and Christine Cohen, to address complaints and rent cap issues. Gorski stressed the need for adequate space to accommodate residents and mentioned the use of KES for meetings.
- Gorski reminded the Board and public about upcoming public forums on January 24th at the High School from 1:00–3:00 p.m. with a walkthrough at noon and noted that additional information would be provided as it becomes available.

Joel D’Angelo -

- D’Angelo commented that he echoed the remarks of Selectman Gorski.
- D’Angelo encouraged residents to attend the public forum scheduled for January 24th at the High School.

First Selectman’s Comments:

Eric Couture -

- Couture thanked individuals who donated to the Friendly Fund and noted that addressing fuel assistance was a priority during the winter months, especially given changes to state program rules.
- Couture encouraged residents to look after their neighbors, enjoy the season, and have a Happy New Year.

Adjournment: Selectman Gorski *Moved* and First Selectman Couture *Seconded* a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:26 p.m.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Sciascia
Clerk