

# Select Board Meeting Agenda

August 27, 2025 Meeting Minutes

**PRESENT:** Select Board Members Mark Mathews, Tony Beattie and Chuck Walkovich; Town Administrator, Andrew MacLean; Executive Assistant, Tracie Looney

**1. AGENDA PACKET (Please see the following link to documents related to agenda items below.)**

<https://town.pepperell.ma.us>

**2. CONSENT AGENDA**

Chuck Walkovich thanked the 250th anniversary committee and all volunteers who helped make the celebration last weekend a success, specifically mentioning the police, fire, EMS, and DPW departments. He noted that the committee had been working since last year and the event was greatly appreciated by the residents of Pepperell.

Chair Mark Mathews reviewed items in the consent agenda, including communications from Charter regarding station changes and information about a Bicycles Battling Cancer Event scheduled for Sunday, September 21st, which would ride through Pepperell with police support.

Andrew MacLean noted there were no minutes this week, and they would be available in September. The Select Board would be reviewing and signing payroll and bill warrants.

There was discussion regarding a letter received from a member of the Planning Board about the Fitzpatrick Collaborative. Tony Beattie questioned why the letter wasn't included in the packet. Andrew MacLean explained it concerned matters subject to an executive session about open negotiations, and would be made public after the situation was resolved. A disagreement arose regarding public input before executive sessions, with Beattie expressing concern that the public should have input on the Peter Fitzpatrick building lease negotiations. MacLean maintained that confidential negotiations couldn't be public and that there had been ample opportunity for public input over the two-year period.

*Tony Beattie moved to approve the consent agenda as presented in the packet. Chuck Walkovich seconded. Vote: 2-1 (Tony Beattie voted against)*

**3. OPPORTUNITIES AND APPOINTMENTS**

There were no appointments to discuss. The board noted both committee openings and employment opportunities were available for interested citizens.

**4. DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS**

**4.1 Fire Chief Brian Borneman Farewell**

Chair Mark Mathews read a proclamation recognizing Fire Chief Brian Borneman for his six years of service to the Pepperell Fire Department. The proclamation acknowledged the Chief's distinguished career beginning in 1991, his leadership advancing training and equipment, and his commitment to the highest standards of public service. The proclamation declared Thursday, August 28, 2025, as "Chief Brian Borneman Day" in Pepperell.

Board members shared personal reflections about Chief Borneman's service. Tony Beattie expressed regret about the circumstances leading to the early retirement and acknowledged how well the Chief had served the town through challenging times. Chuck Walkovich stated the proclamation said it all and wished the Chief well in his future. Mark Mathews shared a personal story about spending an hour with Chief Borneman when first running for Select Board, noting the Chief's honesty and integrity in his work and interactions with others. Town Administrator Andrew MacLean spoke of his six years working with Borneman, calling him remarkable and sharing that he had been highly recommended by former colleagues.

The board announced that an open house would be held at Park Street from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM the following day, sponsored by the auxiliary, for anyone wishing to thank the Chief.

*Chuck Walkovich moved to approve the proclamation for Chief Brian Borneman as read. Seconded by Tony Beattie. The motion was approved unanimously.*

## 4.2 Fire Chief Appointment

Andrew MacLean provided a brief update on the process to appoint a new Fire Chief. He reported that following the board's instructions from their executive session on Monday, he had begun negotiations with Eric Lambert, one of the finalists. Mr. MacLean stated that negotiations were underway and he expected to present a contract to the board before their next meeting. He noted that some of the concerns the board had raised had already been resolved, which would facilitate finalizing the contract.

## 4.3 Constitution Week Proclamation

Rebecca Myers, from the local Prudence Right chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), presented information about Constitution Week, which was established by President Eisenhower in 1956. She explained that DAR has three main missions: to educate, to preserve historical information, and to promote patriotism.

Ms. Myers read a proclamation declaring September 17-23, 2025, as Constitution Week, marking the 238th anniversary of the drafting of the Constitution. The proclamation asked citizens to reaffirm the ideals of the framers and protect the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.

During discussion, Tony Beattie commented on the timeliness of the celebration given current political events and emphasized the importance of protecting constitutional freedoms.

*Chuck Walkovich moved to approve the proclamation as read. Seconded by Tony Beattie. Motion was approved unanimously.*

## 4.4 Building Department Fee Adjustment Request

Andrew MacLean presented three fee adjustments requested by the Building Department:

- Reducing the minimum fee for minor alterations (including sheds) from \$200 to \$100, as the current fee was disproportionate to the cost of some projects
- Increasing pool inspection fees by \$50 each (from \$100 to \$150 for above-ground pools and from \$200 to \$250 for in-ground pools) due to increased time requirements from state regulations
- Increasing the sheet metal fee from \$75 to \$100

Mr. MacLean noted that these were modest adjustments following a major fee review conducted last year. He recommended the changes take effect September 1, 2025, and mentioned that the Building Commissioner would have authority to adjust fees for applications already in process.

Chair Mathews commented that the adjustments demonstrated the department was attentive to costs and watching things closely. Mr. MacLean added that the department was focused on covering costs rather than generating revenue.

*Mark Mathews moved to change the fees effective September 1, 2025 as recommended by the Building Commissioner. Seconded by Tony Beattie. Motion was approved unanimously.*

## 4.5 Public Works Union Contract Approval

Andrew MacLean presented the Memorandum of Agreement for the AFSCME Local 1703 collective bargaining agreement. He explained that the union had already voted to approve the agreement.

Key changes in the contract included:

- Adoption of the town vacation plan, which provides more vacation time at the beginning of employment (3 weeks instead of 2) but caps it at 4 weeks instead of 6 in later years
- Language improvements to reduce vagueness and clarify overtime rules
- Elimination of the clothing service in favor of a revenue-neutral clothing allowance
- Increase in longevity pay for the first time in 21 years, a \$200 increase per eligible employee
- Cost of living adjustments (COLAs) of 3%, 2.5%, and 2.5% over the three years
- Addition of one step to the table in the second year

Mr. MacLean noted that the total contract increase would be 10.75% over three years for employees at the top step, and approximately 8% for employees on lower steps, averaging around 2.75-3% annually, which aligned

with anticipated revenue growth. He credited the good working relationship with the public works employees and their new negotiators for the successful outcome.

*Chuck Walkovich moved to approve the local 1703 AFSCME collective bargaining agreement. Seconded by Tony Beattie. Motion passed unanimously.*

#### **4.6 The Fitzpatrick Collaborative Lease Amendment**

Chair Mark Mathews provided background on the lease amendment process, noting it began over two years ago with himself and Finance Committee Chair John Ladik reviewing the current agreement. The Select Board later asked Andrew MacLean to continue discussions with the Fitzpatrick Collaborative about potential changes. The board recently held two executive sessions to review proposals and ultimately decided to move forward with the amendment.

Andrew MacLean presented key changes to the lease agreement:

- **Cost Restructuring:** Under the current agreement, the town pays approximately \$85,000-100,000 annually in utilities and maintenance. The new agreement shifts all operating costs to the Fitzpatrick Collaborative while the town maintains responsibility for capital investments.
- **Inventory Clarification:** The new agreement addresses concerns about property ownership, with a complete inventory being developed to document both fixed and unfixed town assets in the building.
- **Lease Term Control:** The current agreement allows for automatic 5-year extensions based on performance metrics. The new agreement gives the Select Board direct control, with annual renewal decisions and approximately 3.5 years of notice if the town decides not to renew.
- **Governance:** The Select Board will now have direct governance involvement with two annual meetings - one for the year-end review and annual payment, and another for the renewal process.
- **Financial Structure:** Instead of the current complicated formula, the town will receive 5% of gross revenues with a minimum of \$10,000 annually. With operational costs shifting to the Collaborative, this represents a net gain for the town.

During discussion, Tony Beattie stated he supported the Collaborative but outlined four concerns:

- The need for a deadline to open the commercial kitchen that the town had invested in
- Clearer termination language regarding licenses
- A more diverse board for the Collaborative with business expertise
- A non-compete clause with the Recreation Commission

Andrew MacLean addressed each concern, noting that many were already covered in the agreement or had been discussed with the Collaborative's management. He emphasized that the kitchen issue was being addressed, the agreement already contained termination provisions, the Collaborative was open to board diversity, and that alleged competition with the Recreation Commission was largely based on misunderstandings.

Chuck Walkovich noted that Tony Beattie had not participated in the executive session discussions and defended the Collaborative's efforts despite town limitations on rezoning. He pointed out that the Collaborative had made improvements to the building at no cost to the town and provided valuable community services.

*Chuck Walkovich moved to amend the lease agreement between the Town of Pepperell and the Fitzpatrick Collaborative as shown in the document with an effective date of July 1, 2025. Seconded by Tony Beattie. Vote: 2-1 (Tony Beattie voted against)*

### **5. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Andrew MacLean reported on several items:

- He acknowledged the success of the 250th anniversary celebration, noting strong community turnout and commending committee members including Steve Themelis, Sandy Herman, Bob Poulin, and Tom Hawkins for their work.
- Regarding a utility contract negotiation, Mr. MacLean reported that he had received pricing that would save the town \$8,000-9,000 over two years. He recommended waiting a few more weeks to see if

economic conditions might lead to better pricing before finalizing the agreement. Current offered rates were 13.4 cents compared to the current 13.74 cents.

- Mr. MacLean requested a public hearing on October 8th to review the town's organizational chart, as required by the charter before bringing changes to town meeting. He explained that the chart could be aspirational, showing needs like additional firefighter paramedics that might be addressed over time.
- He informed the board he would be assigning special projects to Town Clerk Brynn Durno to help manage his workload given limited town resources. Chuck Walkovich supported this, noting it would provide valuable training and utilize Ms. Durno's skills.
- Mr. MacLean mentioned the need to schedule a special town meeting warrant discussion, with approximately 10 items expected for the November 3rd meeting.

## **6. LIAISON UPDATES**

Chuck Walkovich reported that the NMCOCG Committee did not meet in August. He mentioned informal conversations with North Middlesex Superintendent Brad Morgan and noted a forum for town administrators scheduled for September 15th. He also mentioned his continued work on financial policies.

Mark Mathews discussed the success of the 250th anniversary events and proposed creating a smaller committee to continue some of the successful activities from the celebration. He noted interest from Pepperell Plus, the Fourth of July Committee, PBA, Cultural Council, and EDAC in participating. The board supported this initiative.

## **7. FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS**

Andrew MacLean noted several upcoming agenda items:

- The board would need to review meeting schedules for November and December due to holiday conflicts
- A finance update in September
- Introduction of finance team members in coming months
- Board updates in October and January
- A special town meeting warrant discussion on October 8th
- A public hearing on the organizational chart on October 8th

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

*Motion to adjourn was made by Tony Beattie, seconded by Chuck Walkovich, and approved unanimously.*

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:42 PM.

**These draft minutes were created using Clerk Minutes, an AI-powered platform that transcribes meetings, identifies speakers, and generates professional minutes.**

Respectfully reviewed and submitted by,

Tracie Looney, Executive Assistant

**APPROVED:**

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Mark Mathews, Chair

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Tony Beattie, Clerk

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Chuck Walkovich, Member

Approved: October 8, 2025