

SELECT BOARD MEETING
MARCH 19, 2026; 6:30 P.M.
5:45 P.M. BOARDS/COMMITTEE INTERVIEWS
DONALD A. RUSSELL MEETING ROOM AND VIA ZOOM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ann Callahan
Ryan Holmes
David Kenney
Mike Labbe

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Roland Tufts (Excused)

STAFF PRESENT: Town Manager, Mark Waltz; Assistant Town Manager, Jeffrey Emerson; Police Chief Marc Hagan

A meeting of the Topsham, Maine Select Board was held on Thursday March 19, 2026, in the Donald A. Russell Meeting Room at the Municipal Building and via Zoom for members and/or interested citizens. The Board first met at 5:45 p.m. to conduct interviews for boards and committees. In the absence of Chair Tufts, Vice Chair Ryan Holmes called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL

Everyone was invited to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Roll Call was taken, and it was noted that all Board members were present, except for Chair Tufts who had been excused.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- We are anxiously anticipating the arrival of our new fire chief, Glenn Gorden, who starts work on Monday.
- We've filled one of our public works openings – two to go! If you have a CDL or are willing to get one and want to help keep Topsham looking great – come see us!
- If you would like to file for a new property tax exemption – homestead, veteran's, etc., the deadline is April 1st. Come in soon! No need to re-file if you already have an exemption.
- Clerk Campbell is happy to report we had our first wedding at the Town Office yesterday. If you need an affordable wedding venue – contact us. \$75.00 for the ceremony and no charge for the space!

Mark Waltz, Town Manager

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES – UPDATE THE SELECT BOARD ON THE STATUS OF THE COUNTY BUDGET

Board Vice Chair (VC) Ryan Holmes, updated the Select Board on where the county budget is going. We started the discussions of the line items. The proposal is at 11.64% for the increase in budget. It has an impact on us because Topsham’s portion is 19.65%. Some conversations have been held noting that the county jail \$600,000 payment every year has been paid off. A portion of the \$600,000 will be used for capital improvements. This will impact us moving forward because next year we will not have the \$600,000. The Committee is looking at all facets of the budget to be sure we have everything we need on line for safety, etc.

No questions or comments were made following VC Holmes update. VC Holmes said, in consideration of the agenda, we have a long night ahead of us. He asked, regarding Re-Code, if the Board would consider saving comments before our discussion and accept just general public comments at this time. The Board was in unanimous (of those present) agreement with this approach.

PUBLIC COMMENT – No one responded to the request for general public comment.

CORRESPONDENCE – None noted.

ADJUSTMENT TO THE AGENDA – VC Holmes moved that Item 26-32 be added to the agenda. The motion was seconded by Board member Kenney, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To add Item 26-32 to the agenda as follows:

26-32 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION FOR REQUEST FROM THE HISTORY COMMITTEE TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE BRIDGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NAMING OF THE NEW TOPSHAM/BRUNSWICK BRIDGE

26-31 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION TO REMOVE AGENDA ITEM 26-31 (EXECUTIVE SESSION) FROM THE AGENDA

Removal of this item was suggested due to the lengthy agenda this evening.

Motion was made by VC Holmes, seconded by Board member Callahan, and it was unanimously (of those present) **VOTED** To remove agenda item 26-31 from the agenda and add it to the agenda of a future meeting of the Select Board.

CONSENT CALENDER
APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING HELD MARCH 5

Motion was made by Board member Callahan, seconded by Board member Labbe, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To accept the minutes of the March 5, 2026 meeting as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING – None noted.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None noted.

OLD BUSINESS – None noted.

NEW BUSINESS

26-26 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION TO APPLY AND ACCEPT A MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL ATV ENFORCEMENT/EDUCATIONAL GRANT

Police Chief Marc Hagan reported that the Maine Wardens Service has asked if we (Topsham Police Department) would be interested in partnering with them again this year on a Multi-Jurisdictional ATV Enforcement/Education Grant which will run from March 15 up to December 15, 2026. Amount of the grant is \$4,000 to use towards the enforcement and education of ATV related laws.

Chief Hagan said the Maine Warden Service will work with the Police Department to schedule enforcement/education details throughout the grant period. Off-duty Topsham officers would accompany game wardens during scheduled details in Topsham and then be compensated through grant funding for any overtime incurred.

It was noted that the Town of Topsham has approximately 16 miles of ATV trails within its jurisdiction. In 2025 a total of 17 contacts with ATV's were made. Chief Hagan requested the Select Board approve the partnership with the Maine Game Warden in this 2026 grant endeavor.

Motion was made by Ms. Callahan, seconded by Mr. Labbe, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To apply and accept a multi-jurisdictional ATV Enforcement/Educational Grant from the Maine Wardens Service.

26-27 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION ON THE APPOINTMENT OF LAURIE WILLIAMSON TO BIKE/PEDESTRIAN COMMITTEE AND ADAM PRIDE TO THE HISTORY COMMITTEE

Ms. Callahan said the candidates were interviewed this afternoon and both were delightful candidates and will be a benefit to the Town.

Motion was made by Ms. Callahan, seconded by Mr. Labbe, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To appoint Laurie Williamson to the Bike/Pedestrian Committee and Adam Pride to the History Committee.

26-28 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION REGARDING HOW TO PROCEED WITH RE-CODE

The recording secretary was instructed to keep the minutes at a minimum because several more workshops and meetings will decide the outcome of the thoughts presented this evening.

Some explanation includes a memo in file from Don Spann, Chair of the Planning Board to the Select Board explaining that during its meeting on March 12, 2026, the Planning Board held a discussion on the desired direction for the Topsham ReCode initiative. Following discussion, a motion was made by the Planning Board *“That the recommendation to the Select Board is to change the focus from a conglomerate zoning change to a more focused piecemeal review of our existing zoning ordinance, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan”*.

A memo to the Select Board from Town Manager Waltz, also on file, dated March 11, 2026 said *...The Planning Board and the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC) need the Select Board to either confirm the Planning Board’s proposed direction or instruct that a different one be pursued*. In general, staff recommends that the process of continuing to review and revise the 3rd draft continue to occur at the Planning Board with opportunities for input by all interested parties and final decisions made by the Planning Board ...

Mr. Spann, Chair of the Planning Board presented the opening comment and said: For the record, whatever you decide we will support, but it's the Planning Boards responsibility to share our concerns with you, so that you can make informed decisions. Chair Spann then provided history of the various meeting and workshops held. He said at the time the Comp. Plan was approved, he was chairman of both TDI and the Planning Board.

Mr. Spann said we still have the biggest chapters of the ReCode to review – a long way to do. Some comments include that the new code will be hard for staff and developers to interpret and, if we are not careful, Topsham will be known as a place too difficult to work with. He said a redline showing what the ordinance said and the changes made would have helped.

At this point in the meeting, Susan Rae-Reeves presented comments representing work that has been accomplished with ReCode. She said she has lived in Topsham for 12 years and a consensus

building is crucial. She said that CPIC focused on the Center Code. Ms. Rae-Reeves said when the Planning Board voted to scrap the ReCode at its March 12 meeting, a lot of comments were mischaracterized and she refuted the comments. She said the planner three years ago Julie Erdman noted where ReCode makes zones non-conforming. Article 6 has not been looked at by the Planning Board. They have been asking for workshops and they cancelled them. The Comp Plan calls for greater density. Regarding R3-Rural, CPIC has had no input.

Ms. Rae-Reeves said she feels that 8 more workshops will get us there. Comments from over 600 residents have voiced their desires in 9 big areas:

- Streets for people
- Local and Regional Mobility
- Access to Nature and Open Spaces
- Foster Social Connection
- Support Knowledge Economy
- Be Deliberate about growth
- Housing Diversity
- Open Governance
- A More Sustainable Future

Ms. Rae-Reeves memo to the Board follows:

- 99 Main Street - Looking at what has occurred nearby, we considered the request to allow the general building in this zone. It turns out a fair amount of change has occurred nearby 99 Main since ReCode's first draft. The zone boundaries have changed, as we created the Mixed Transitional zone. The density of the area has been affected by a proposed development at 4 Union Park Rd. And there is general recognition that allowing for increased housing density can only be a good thing. We suggest that the general building be allowed in the Upper Village.

- Park Drive - Given the current state of retail, with no new proposed construction for retail uses in town over the last several years (Market Basket being the last), the concern about retail coming into the Mixed Transitional zone is minimal. The larger concern, it turns out, is the suburban storefront, which we often equate with retail. Given the history of Goodwill on Park Drive, and the nonconforming use being a larger problem than building type, CPIC suggests allowing the retail use in the Mixed Transitional zone.

- Finally, the current situation with several car dealerships and related services in both Middle and Upper Village zones has been raised as another nonconformity matter for further discussion. They are currently permitted conditionally. If there are plans and requests for expansion, the landscaping options being worked out for conditional uses will come into play. So we suggest that the use – vehicle dealers and services –

currently allowed on a conditional basis be allowed in the Upper Village zone.

The 2019 Comp Plan is our guide, and we were unanimous in thinking through the conflict points and coming to what we feel are good compromises for the town. While we understand that ReCode, once approved, will continue to be modified, we want at this point to address all of the sticking points as best we can, understanding that Planning Board review is an ongoing next step.

Comments were taken from residents present and watching on line including:

Pere Bono a CPIC Member –Spoke in favor of form-based code. The intent is to make neighborhood center more usable and safer. Mr. Bono said we asked the Planning Board not to stop the work. Thanks were extended to Planning Board member Scott Libby.

Tim Dunham – Recently returned as a member of the Planning Board. Said it is a lot to take in. We need to trust extremely intelligent people who have put much consideration into this. Thinks a redline version of small changes is the way to go – just not all or nothing.

James Trusiani – Asked for permission to speak which was granted as he is a Brunswick resident. In early 2000 the Town had nothing. An old building, old fire station and by 2008 the Town grew to higher assessed value. Taxes were lowered and services went up. Only because the Town grew. We gave the Highlands a TIF. But now the Town is not growing enough. Need a land use assessment. Need to finish this document and let the Town grow.

Rick Schultz (online) – Said he wears two hats, a resident tax payer and engineer and member of CPIC. Said he strives to be open minded. Let’s fix the process and take it back to meetings.

Dan Catlin (online)– Has lived in this area for 66 years. On the TDI Board. Said tonight he is present as an owner of property at the Topsham Fair Mall. Does economic development and shopping centers in Maine and New Hampshire.

Mr. Catlin said he would like to make 99 Main Street area where people can also live but he needs some help. The ReCode is too much to get ones arms around. CPIC should pick a couple chapters and work at that. Takes his hat off to CPIC and the Boards. Said he gets calls all the time from retailers who are coming into Maine and the first thing they ask is what does zoning look like.

Curtis Neufeld (online)- 14 Merrymeeting Drive – Works with developer Jim Howard. The process has been too long. Andy Sturgeon from TDI has done a lot of good work. Looked at a project in Standish and the planner helped us get through the code. Their former base code was not workable. If we accept this ReCode as it is, developers will go to other towns.

At this point in the meeting, VC Holmes limited comments to 5 minutes.

Susan Rae-Reeves said Mr. Catlin raised comments on Goodwill. Retail is allowed there. It will not be non-conforming. Changes have been made to allow 88 units.

Don Spann – Changes were not developed by Julie Erdman, but by Tom Lister. There as only one memo to the Planning Board.

With no more comments to be heard, VC Holmes thanked everyone for their time and effort. Said a lot of information has been heard. Our job is to keep an open mind and we have to do our due diligences. Everyone wants to see the best for our Town and for Topsham to be the best town in the state. Board member Callahan said this is a daunting task. Volunteers have spent hours of time. I want to see us come up with a win-win situation. We should charge all departments to work together. We risk losing residents if our taxes keep climbing. I don't have the answers, but we need to simplify the process and perhaps more than one meeting a month. We need to work together.

Board member Kenney agreed with what Ms. Callahan said. We need to have more meetings. And we need to stop bickering. Board member Labbe said we need to digest comments made. VC Holmes said let's look at work done by volunteers. There seems to be a lack of conformance between parties. Figure out how do we support the volunteers to get to a win-win situation. Question is how do we align the changes to the proposed code. I heard tonight a lot about development and how it increases taxes. We should table this discussion now to have time to think.

Town Manager Waltz said all parties are willing to work together and we need to find a way to get everyone on the same page.

Motion was made by Ms. Callahan, seconded by Mr. Labbe, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To take Agenda Item 26-28 until the May meeting and in the interim to work on a resolution for ReCode and Planning.

26-29 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION REGARDING A NOTICE ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT INTO TOWN, MSAD #75 AND COUNTY BUDGETS, WHICH WILL AFFECT THE FALL 2026 PROPERTY TAX BILLS

The Town Manager said it is important to send something out to inform Topsham's residents of how the figures actually come to fruition determining the amount of their tax bills. The tax bills will come out in September, but decisions are being made now that impact them. It would be good to hold a campaign to get people out to make the process known.

Motion was made by Ms. Callahan, seconded by Mr. Kenney, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To issue a notice of the opportunities for input into Town, MSAD #75 and County Budgets which will affect the Fall 2026 property tax bills.

26-30 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION ON APPOINTING A SELECT BOARD MEMBER TO ATTEND WITH THE TOWN MANAGER “GO402 NIMS/ICS OVERVIEW FOR SENIOR AND APOINTED OFFICIALS.” THIS IS NECESSARY TRAINING TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR FEMA REIMBURSEMENT FOR FUTURE EVENTS

Motion was made by Ms. Callahan, seconded by Mr. Kenney, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To appoint Mike Labbe to attend with the Town Manager “GO402 NIMS/ICS overview for senior and appointed officials.”

Board member Kenney said he may also attend the meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday, March 31, 2026 in the First Floor Commissioners Meeting Room.

26-31 EXECUTIVE SESSION - ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO TITLE 1 M.R.S.A. §405 (6) (C) TO DISCUSS LEASE OF REAL PROPERTY CONSIDERATION

Motion was made by VC Holmes, seconded by Board member Callahan, and it was unanimously (of those present)

VOTED

To remove agenda item 26-31 from the agenda and add it to the agenda of the next meeting of the Select Board.

26-32 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION ON THE HISTORY COMMITTEE SENDING A LETTER TO THE BRIDGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE REGARDING THE NAMING PROCESS FOR THE NEW TOPSHAM-BRUNSWICK BRIDGE

The Town Manager explained that the History Committee is requesting to send a letter regarding the naming of the new bridge. In the interim, a call came into the Town office from Mr. Bennett on the Bridge Advisory Committee who said they would like to use the same name “The Pejepscot Falls Bridge.

It was agreed it is hard to come up with one name. Suggestion was made that other people may have history to support a different name. The Board agreed that they do not have the authority to name the bridge. VC Holmes asked if we should open the subject up to the citizens. The Town

Manager was asked to inquire as to the process Brunswick will use to determine its name recommendation.

Motion was made by Ms. Callahan, seconded by Mr. Labbe, and it was

VOTED

3 in favor with 1 opposed (Mr. Holmes) to allow the History Committee to release its recommendation to name the new bridge “The Pejepscot Falls Bridge.” And to defer any recommendation by the Select Board to a later date.

ADJOURN

Motion was made by Mr. Labbe, seconded by Mr. Holmes, and it was unanimously

VOTED

To adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Williams, Recording Secretary