Town of Falmouth Select Board
Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 3, 2025, 6:30 PM
Select Board Meeting Room
Town Hall
59 Town Hall Square, Falmouth, MA 02540

AGENDA

Select Board
Present: Robert P. Mascali, Chair; Heather M. H. Goldstone, Vice-Chair; Douglas C. Brown; Colin Reed; Jack Richardson
Others present: Mike Renshaw, Town Manager; Peter Johnson-Staub, Assistant Town Manager; Maura O'Keefe, Town Counsel

1. OPEN SESSION - 6:30 PM

a. Call to Order – By Chair Mascali

b. Pledge of Allegiance – Led by Select Board

c. Recognition –

Chair Mascali congratulated 1) Jack Afarian and the Cape Cod Marathon for being voted the best marathon in Massachusetts; Hannah Vanderscheuren for receiving a housing champion award this year for her work on the affordable housing and workforce committee.

Dr. Goldstone recognized the Police Department and non-profits for work over the past weekend collecting donations for the Falmouth Service Center.

Mr. Brown recognized the Water Quality Management Committee (WQMC) and Wastewater Department staff for securing a $450,000 grant for PRBs at Snug Harbor.

Mr. Richardson recognized the Flying Bridge for fundraising efforts for disaster relief from Hurricane Melissa.

d. Announcements –

Chair Mascali announced the Veterans' Day ceremony on November 11.

Dr. Goldstone announced 1) the Falmouth Public Schools Art Show at the Art Center opening Friday; 2) FALCAN's workshop on Monday.

e. Public Comment

Carey Murphy – (passed out materials to the Board) – said he represented Friends of Cape Cod Country Club – said people are concerned about what is happening at the Falmouth Country Club (FCC) – said people are confused about Articles 12 and 13 – referred to a reluctant owner of the property – asked for Select Board support for Article 14 – asked the Board to think hard about what it's doing with Articles 12 and 13 – said the golf course sits on an impact parcel – said it's a water recharge area – said property values will plummet – said he is not anti-solar – said Falmouth has taken a lot on – said it's an agriculturally zoned place – asked Board to think long and hard about how process plays out – asked again for support on Article 14 – said once the parcel is gone it will not come back – said there are other places to site solar – asked for a conversation with the community to plan this properly.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Licenses

1) Consider a vote to approve an application by Cape Cod Winery for a Special One-Day Agricultural Liquor License to be executed at Mahoney's Garden Center, 958 East Falmouth Highway, for an agricultural event, "Merry & Bright," on November 13, 2025, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

2) Consider a vote to approve the application by Falmouth Theatre Guild for two Special One-Day All Alcoholic Beverages Licenses to be located at Highfield Theater, 58 Highfield Drive, Falmouth, on the weekends of December 12th through 14th and 19th through 21st.

3) Consider a vote to approve a request to change the date of a Special One-Day Wine & Malt Beverages License issued to West Falmouth Library, 575 West Falmouth Highway, for a Fall Wine Tasting dated October 29, 2025, to November 12, 2025, due to illness of the presenter.

b. Administrative Orders

1) Consider a vote to approve a request from the Falmouth Cultural Council to apply to the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod (AFCC) for a grant in the amount of $5,000 and to the Rotary Club of Falmouth, Cape Cod for a grant in the amount of $1,000

2) Consider a vote to approve the request by Highfield Hall & Gardens for a Sign Variance to place a holiday sign at the corner of Depot Avenue and North Main Street for Annual Holidays at Highfield to be displayed from date of approval through December 15, 2025

Motion by Mr. Reed: To approve Second: Mr. Richardson Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0

Dr. Goldstone asked Mr. Renshaw about the status of the cultural institution licenses. He said staff is still working out details, but "it's close." He said there is a plan in place to communicate with affected vendors and businesses.

3. BUSINESS

a. Report - Board of Library Trustees

Judy Fenwick, chair of the board of library trustees, introduced the report with a quotation about the importance of libraries. She went on to highlight other features of the annual written report, including the history of the trustees' fund. Director Brian Stokes spoke briefly on the increased use of the libraries and possible reasons for the increase. He said they are truly community centers, not just repositories for books, and more vital than they have ever been. He also summarized features of programming and attendance at them. At Chair Mascali's invitation, he also talked about library work and services/programming at the county jail.

Mr. Reed asked what the Select Board should be considering as it enters into its own strategic plan. Mr. Stokes said just to understand the changing role of the library in the community, how inclusive it is, and how much it provides.

Mr. Richardson asked what percentage of the library staff lives in town or on the Cape. Mr. Stokes said he thinks most of the staff are local to Falmouth, and some are over the bridge in Buzzards Bay or Wareham. He said in his experience, staff farther afield do not last very long.

Mr. Brown asked about a temporary library in East Falmouth. Mr. Stokes said once the funding and construction schedules are more specific, they will begin to put a plan in place. He said they do want to offer library services in the East Falmouth Village for the 18-24-month construction period and could begin to think about this sooner rather than later.

Dr. Goldstone thanked the presenters and praised two features: The Library of Things, and all the digital offerings and shared library system.

b. Report - Agricultural Commission

Stan Ingram summarized the features of the annual written report, including the bad cranberry harvest, the budget and what it would cover, an overview of farms in Falmouth, the activities of Farming Falmouth, and the monitoring of Conservation Restrictions (CRs). He focused on the loss of viable farmland at what he feels is an alarming rate and offered ideas to address that. The possible creation of a fund that could be used for agricultural preservation, including agricultural workers as a group that is eligible for affordable housing, and raising solar panels above ground level were additional ideas Mr. Ingram offered. He said the Commission is down one member now.

Mr. Richardson asked if the Commission could help drive the concept of community farm space. Mr. Ingram provided details about a recent look at a 6-acre parcel and how it could possibly be divided up into conservation, community gardens, and affordable housing. Mr. Richardson asked if the commission could use more than $2,000. Mr. Ingram said that amount for now is fine.

Dr. Goldstone spoke about collaboration among various entities to achieve goals of farming, conservation, and housing. She suggested working with the Falmouth Cultural Council as well as Farming Falmouth and The 300 Committee.

c. Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget Policy

Mr. Renshaw commented on the importance of the budget policy and introduced Laura Sitrin to present the report, which was included in the Select Board packet. Ms. Sitrin highlighted the five challenges enumerated and explained in the report, as well as the reserves. She said a longer-range plan regarding operating/capital costs vs. revenues would be presented to the Board within the next few months.

Mr. Brown asked about the Falmouth Affordable Housing Fund (FAHF) and how to approach that need. Mr. Johnson-Staub said that significant challenges face the town manager and the Board because there is no money in the till. He identified the need that the FAHF faces and the difficulty of meeting that need without a tax increase, or without payroll reduction or having reductions in force. There was brief discussion about that type of scenario if a project were to come forward and what would happen. Mr. Renshaw said the situation would need attention and creative ideas would need to be offered.

Mr. Reed asked what the 2027 outlook was in relation to the stated status in paragraph 3 of hiring and wages. Mr. Renshaw said that meeting with departments has begun and that the approach would have to be strategic and tactical going forward to meet the objectives of the strategic plan.

Mr. Richardson said the scale of financial disruption included in the report is not the fault of the current or previous Boards. He suggested that a regional approach might be called for. He also asked for a review of how much has been spent on consultant fees as a way to reduce costs.

Dr. Goldstone said the policy is, for the most part, the right policy in terms of being conservative regarding forecasting, and very responsible with funding. She agreed with creatively and aggressively looking for and creating state and federal opportunities. She said she questions the idea about establishing a level service budget and explained her reasoning.

Chair Mascali asked about the timeline for the budget, which Mr. Renshaw outlined. He said it was tight over the next two months.

Regarding increased needs, Mr. Richardson cited examples of how expensive Falmouth is to live in. He asked about raising taxes and how that would work in light of Proposition 2 ½ . Ms. Sitrin said she would look into that.

Ms. Sitrin, in response to a question from Mr. Brown, clarified some information on the Town's retirement plan and unfunded liability. Mr. Johnson-Staub added further detailed information regarding the statutory date by which time the pension fund has to be fully funded. There was brief discussion about possibilities that might evolve with the fund and how they might be handled, which underscored the need to be creative and aggressive in approach.

Motion by Mr. Brown: To approve Second: Mr. Richardson

Dr. Goldstone offered an amendment: that we strike the level service budget language to simply say that the Town of Falmouth will seek to establish a budget which limits increases

in order to maintain or improve operations within the Proposition 2 ½ levy limit. There was brief discussion among the Board members about the proposed amendment. Mr. Renshaw said he had no objection to the language and offered ways that efficiencies could be put in place that would reduce costs without affecting service.

Mr. Brown said that he would accept the amendment to his motion. Mr. Richardson said he would still second it.

Vote: Yes – 5 No - 0

d. Consider a vote to approve the solar carport canopy Notice of Lease (NOL) and Lease Agreement with Solect Energy Development LLC for the Falmouth High School Lot C (Teacher Lot at 1200 Gifford St. EXT)

At the outset of this item's presentation, it was determined that this presentation would also apply to the next item on the agenda, but two separate votes would be taken.
Stephanie Madsen, Sustainability Specialist, along with Paul Dart, Director of Finance and Operations for the schools, showed slides of the areas in question: Falmouth High School Lot C and North Falmouth Elementary rear lot. Ms. Madsen outlined the process used in selecting this project and leases. She requested approval of the lease agreements.

Mr. Dart briefly summarized the details of the two canopies and how they will benefit the schools. He also outlined the savings to the Town.

Board questions/discussion included these points:
- The arguments against covering the large parking lot at the high school but the possibility of doing it in the future
- The possibility of doing the same at the Mullen-Hall parking lot, and why not now
- How specific regulations and restrictions determine the design and size of the solar array
- Question about the wind turbine that sits at the high school
- Concerns of removal of canopy at end of life or if broken, which the lease addresses
- Ramifications to future budgets if the purchase option is used

Motion by Mr. Reed: To approve Notice of Lease and Lease Agreement with Solect Energy Development LLC for the Falmouth High School Lot C
Second: Mr. Richardson Vote: Yes – 5 No - 0

e. Consider a vote to approve the Notice of Lease (NOL) and Lease Agreement with Solect Energy Development LLC for the solar carport canopy at North Falmouth Elementary School (62 Old Main Rd)

Motion by Mr. Reed: To approve Notice of Lease and Lease Agreement with Solect Energy Development LLC for the North Falmouth Elementary solar carport canopy at 62 Old Main Rd. Second: Mr. Richardson Vote: Yes – 5 No - 0

f. Discuss the requirements and necessary resources for implementing a residential property tax exemption

Mr. Renshaw provided an overview of the item and introduced Ms. Sitrin for the presentation. She summarized basic information about a residential tax exemption via approximately 8 screens containing definitions, comparative charts, and data analysis. Questions from the Board during the presentation raised the following points:

- The information that the resident actually has to submit
- The point where the exemption does not really have much benefit to the homeowner
- The need for explanation of the highlighted break-even point on the screen entitled *Illustration of a 10% Exemption* (Ms. Sitrin: The lesser valued get a higher reduction in their taxes because the taxes weren't that high to begin with.)
- Description of those not eligible for exemption (property is not homeowner's primary residence)
- That some homeowners even with the exemption will be paying more tax because the rate is going up
- That applications have to come in before the tax rate is set in order to be revenue-neutral to the Town
- That taxes go up on higher valued properties even with the exemption
- The need to re-shift the tax burden in Town due to the affordability crisis that exists now
- That the chart in the packet is only for the 70% who are residents
- The need to see the resident vs. non-resident impact
- Timeline for implementation of the exemption plan
- The need for good marketing to residents
- That this plan is for residential properties only, not commercial
- If storage of information is actually necessary, and how to prove on-line submission of a tax return is actually for that property
- The need to look at storage of information carefully
- That other communities on the Cape have done this already
- That the affordability problem for Falmouth needs to be addressed, so moving forward with the work and the backup should continue to get to a point where the Board can decide
- An understanding that this proposal does not require a legislative vote
- Suggestion to Ms. Sitrin to include percents of 15, 20, and 25 breakdowns for the Board to see and to pursue

Chair Mascali said the consensus here is to move forward with the information and return to the Board. Mr. Renshaw said they would return to the Board with particulars as it ties to the FY2027 budget in the coming weeks. Mr. Reed noted that the Board also needs the data on what percentage of homes are owner-occupied, as hard as it will be to obtain that information, in order to decide. Mr. Johnson-Staub said his understanding after talking with the Department of Revenue is that the data being sought does not exist. The hard number will only be known after the Board votes the policy and residents submit applications. There was brief Board comment about this aspect of the issue. Mr. Johnson-Staub said he would follow up with the Cape Cod Commission, which has information about these percentages. Mr. Richardson said that reaching out to other towns that have done this to see how the process worked would also be useful.

g. Discuss the requirements and potential benefits of implementing a Water Infrastructure Improvement Fund (WIIF)

Mr. Renshaw introduced Amy Lowell, Wastewater Superintendent, who presented the information via power point, approximately 6 screens, which included definitions, the source of revenue, the need for such a fund, and how the fund would work. A Town Meeting vote and ballot vote would be required for approval. Ms. Lowell recommended including the WIIF on the April 2026 Town Meeting warrant. She also recommended 3% based on needs. Mr. Johnson-Staub said the Board would need to decide in December for an April Town Meeting warrant item.

Board comment/questions included the following:

- Due to increasing Town demands, the Board needs to discuss the financing not just of this particular area, but how all future projects will be financed into the future
- Suggestion to have a joint meeting with the Finance Committee to discuss the long-term capital plan and debt forecast
- Comparing the fund as described vs. a debt exclusion and impact on residents' tax bills
- To model out the capital needs and how they can be met under the different scenarios
- The need to look at things in regard to people's personal wallets
- Comparison with the Capital and Debt Stabilization Fund, which is already part of the capital plan, and how that works
- How the WIIF differs from an Enterprise fund
- Possible help in other ways, such as with grant opportunities

Mr. Renshaw clarified that the Board was seeking more information regarding tax implications and impacts at 1%, 2%, and 3% surcharge rates. The surcharge would apply to all properties.

h. Discuss and consider a vote to approve an application to the Falmouth Affordable Housing Fund from Michael Galasso, 4 Sandwich Road, LLC regarding the project located at 4 Sandwich Road

Jed Cornock, Community Development Director, introduced Michael Galasso, who narrated the presentation for the Board, which included details of the project and the units to be built, as well as the rents, information which is in the application included in the Select Board packet, and SHI inclusion. He said any/all changes to the project would be in coordination with Mr. Cornock, Ms. Fish, and Town administration.

Board questions/comment included these points:

- The commitment to secure other funding if the project does not get State money
- That the units will be deed restricted in perpetuity, and that the ground lease will likely not be an impediment to that
- Clarification of where the units will actually be on the parcel and how the rest of the parcel would be used
- Review of requirements for all units to be on the SHI and certain state grant funding
- If all funding were secured (State funding would be $2M), what the end goal for the project would be
- The importance of follow-through, such as letters of support, if the Board invests up front in this project
- That the funding is structured as a loan, not a grant (Mr. Johnson-Staub detailed how this "forgivable loan" works)
- That with the loan, there are defined measures to take if the project isn't completed as required
- Compliment for the design of the project

Regarding the SHI, Jed Cornock clarified that all units would not be eligible because it is not a 40B project. This is a special permit for multi-family use through the ZBA, he said. The eligible units are the 80% AMIs and the 100%AMIs, not the 120%AMIs. But they are all deed restricted and affordable, Mr. Cornock said. Chair Mascali added that to get the mix that Mr. Galasso wants, they would all be on the SHI.

Motion by Mr. Reed: That the Select Board, as Trustees of the Falmouth Affordable Housing Fund, award One Million, Five Hundred Thousand Dollars ($1,500,000) to be awarded as a loan secured by a mortgage, subordination of lease, and other documents on 4 Sandwich Rd. as outlined in the Town Manager's documentation and subject to the conditions discussed herein, for the construction of ten (10) deed-restricted units at 4 Sandwich Rd., of which two (2) will be deed-restricted at 80% of the area median income, two (2) will be deed-restricted at 100% of the area median income and six (6) will be deed-restricted at 120% of the area median income and to authorize the Town Manager to execute the documentation setting forth the terms of the financial award for construction at 4 Sandwich Road. The award will be made to 4 Sandwich Road, LLC as developer, and will require such loan documents as Town Counsel may advise: loan documents will be required from the developer; the owner of 4 Sandwich Rd.; and any ground lessor(s), as written.

There was brief Board comment about the above language. Mr. Johnson-Staub said that any changes will come before the Board as the process unfolds.

Second: Mr. Richardson Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0

i. Presentation and discussion on the ClearPoint Strategy strategic plan and capital project status tracking platform

Mr. Renshaw began by orally updating the item for the Board, referring to *Item 3.i.* in the Select Board packet. He said the management tool, among other things, provides performance targets and data regarding how best to achieve goals. He used the quote, “What gets measured gets managed” as a way of explaining the value of the program. He said the report provided to the Board was meant to be an illustration of what is possible with the program. He went on to outline further phases of the program’s use. He said this would be a great start to track and manage and be more accountable.

Board discussion with the Town Manager included these points:

- The ongoing challenge of uploading the data, which will be handled by a designated department member
- That departments are beginning to work their ways through the system and working out bumps along the way
- That the goal is to have the public-facing dashboard available in the spring
- Assurance that the cost of the program has been budgeted, including renewal
- What the Board has to do with the Town Manager to achieve the measures and descriptions as depicted in the report

j. Discuss the Town of Brewster's Preschool Family Support Program

Mr. Renshaw orally outlined the program for the Board, referring to *Item 3.j.* and other materials in the Select Board packet. He spoke briefly about the implications of such a program in Falmouth.

Board comment/questions covered these points:

- That there are no income or financial eligibility requirements for the program and how Falmouth might handle that
- The impetus behind the program and what problem it addresses
- The need to include the school system in this conversation, which Mr. Renshaw said has already begun
- The overall goal to introduce earlier childhood daycare
- That at this point, no specifics regarding funding have been offered
- That it is a good idea but has a cost

k. Update on police station site location process

Mr. Renshaw orally updated the Board on this item, referring to *Item 3.k.* in the Select Board packet. He highlighted the significant concern voiced by the Board and community members at the two forums regarding the siting of the facility within the watershed protection overlay district within the Long Pond water service area. He outlined his request to PSAC regarding additional sites, both described in *Item 3.k.* He commended Town Counsel for all her work on this issue. He said further vetting of the two alternative sites is happening now.

Mr. Renshaw announced a called meeting on Thursday Nov. 13 at the Senior Center at which time two or three additional site options would be offered. He said his hope was that enough information would be available to allow the Select Board to feel comfortable making a decision so a site could be identified by Town Meeting.

Board comment included these points:

- Many thanks to all who listened to the community and were able to provide this alternative pathway to get to a positive outcome in such a short period of time
- When the Select Board would be asked to vote on the site. (Mr. Renshaw said ideally, if the Board were ready to do so, it would be Nov. 13, but Nov. 17 would also be workable.)
- That the Board would be willing to look at things that it previously had not regarding acceptable parcels

4. TOWN MANAGER'S SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Mr. Renshaw reported on the following:

- Update on Cape Cod YMCA's request that Falmouth be the responsible entity for their environmental reports and the desired finding of no significant impact for release of funding (Mr. Brown asked about the possibility of offering the YMCA connection to the sewer; Mr. Renshaw said their project including septic has already been approved and it is not related to this phase of getting the funding released.)
- Update on fire chief recruitment and consultant hired for this
- Other recruitments that are underway, such as deputy building commissioner and assistant director of assessing

Chair Mascali asked for an update on the RFP for the golf course at a future time. Mr. Johnson-Staub said it would be brought to the Board on Dec. 3 for the lease

5. SELECT BOARD REPORTS

Dr. Goldstone reported on the following:

- Taking a tour of two homes which Belonging To Each Other operates which provide housing for the unhoused, especially important for the upcoming winter

Mr. Richardson reported on the following:

- Toured Falmouth Recovery Center, which has really grown over two years

Mr. Brown reported on the following:

- Meeting in Woods Hole with a Steamship Authority (SSA) engineer regarding the new ships in use and the research of new fuel

Chair Mascali reminded members about upcoming Precinct meetings. The Board worked out which meetings they would attend on which nights.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Mr. Reed asked for a debt forecast and a joint meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee
- Mr. Brown asked for a discussion of 40B legislation with our local legislators to see if improvements could be made.

7. ADJOURN

Motion by Mr. Richardson: To adjourn Second: Mr. Reed Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0

Respectfully submitted,
Carole Sutherland, Recording Secretary