

Stockton Springs Select Board Minutes

October 27, 2025 Meeting

Attendees:

Select Board Members Present	Betsy Bradley (BB) Elizabeth (Liz) Lenharr (LL) Marsha Shute (MS) - Chairperson Sadie Lloyd Mudge (SLM) – Town Manager
Select Board Members Absent	
Recording Secretary	Sarah Hardy
Community members	Approximately 14 community members were in attendance for the meeting. Speaker names were captured in the notes as best as possible. No attendance list was captured.

#	Agenda	Notes
1.	Roll Call: Call to Order	Marsha Shute called meeting to order at 6:00 pm roll call – see attendance above
2.	Adjustment to the agenda	none
3.	Approval of minutes from September 22, 2025 and October 14, 2025	No changes suggested Marsha Shute made a motion to accept the minutes for September 22, 2025 and October 14, 2025. The motion was seconded by Liz Lenharr and approved unanimously.
4.	Open to the Public	<p>Q: Susan Henkel – a couple of meetings ago a real estate agent was here to discuss two properties. Are there any updates? A: SLM - The attorney sent the language for sale, it's being reviewed by the town attorney. After that's approved the properties will be posted.</p> <p>Sarah Hardy – need to extend the moratorium for the solar, it expires in December. SLM – will put it on the agenda in early December Agenda</p> <p>George Russell – new doors for the town office are in (they were in boxes in the meeting room)</p> <p>Dr. Miller (superintendent of Searsport schools). The budget vote is next week on November 4th. The current budget under consideration is a zero \$ increase and she's asking folks to get out and vote. There is a new communications director for RSU 20 and they are interested in hearing feedback on how visibility has been improved. Dr. Miller had handouts on how the budget is formed for anyone at the meeting who wanted one.</p> <p>Kevin Kelly – he is the county commissioner for district 2 which includes Stockton Springs. He indicated that he hopes to make updates like this a regular thing. He provided a sheet to the select board on how our share of county taxes are derived. Forty-six percent of the budget is going to house the residents of the jails and insurance costs, there are 22 cost centers and 33 line items in the budget..</p>

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The jail is 50 years old so has maintenance needs; there is a reentry program that works very well for offenders, job training etc. The jail actually rents out beds in other jails, the rates were \$58 a night for males and had jumped to \$100 a night a few years ago. A step increase was negotiated but those steps have been made and we're at \$95 now. Unfortunately, there has been some issues in management at the two jails and the agreements have evaporated and they are insisting on over \$200 a night for males and female rates. Our commissioners are attempting to renegotiate with other counties.

Related to medical insurance, the county was self-insured and it used to make financial sense but it no longer does. In his investigation into the coverage, he found we were probably overcharged a million dollars. Kevin has negotiated new rates, and he has gotten a good plan through Cross Insurance. But it's still self-insured and it's a high utilization plan (due in part to the age and condition of the employees). He's working diligently on getting prices down and is still working on decreasing them by \$30,000 a month. Finding a broker to transform the insurance is probably going to be a multiyear process.

IT is another whopper for the budget. The county must update the outdated accounting software. They are also changing the website to make it more useable and easier to search.

Some additional changes Kevin mentioned are: The commission has considered continuing with the 12 month budget or switching to an 18 month budget. When it's a 12 month period until the towns begin sending in revenue to the county (and each town uses different financial calendars), holdover loans are obtained and Kevin found that we pay about \$100,000 each year in interest just for those holdover loans. While the budget committee first voted to have an 18 month budget (to try to minimize the need for holdover loans), after analysis they voted to keep it at 12 month because the towns would have had to contribute an even bigger portion to fund for 18 months and that will be challenging without adequate planning at the town level. The commissioners still have to vote on the 12 month recommendation made by the budget committee.

Additionally, the audit of 2021 is showing some potential challenges: too many people have access to the accounts and there are over 40 checking accounts so they are attempting to decrease those.

Lastly: related to the opioid settlement of 1.6M for the county – there is an ad hoc committee to create a permanent committee for how to spend the money. About \$140,000 was spent so far and sent to the jails but not all of the money spent is easy to trace. Getting these settlement payments under control is in line with the other financial reorgs they are doing elsewhere in the county operations.

BB – trying to wrap her head around the 18 month vs 12 month budget.

SLM – we would be billed in Feb if we move to an 18 month fund and we'd have to take payment from the unassigned fund. The risk for that is that it will trigger audit questions if our unassigned fund goes too low – also if another expense comes that would make that issue worse. There is no way to get more money from the taxpayers till next year because we already set our tax obligation. If they planned ahead for the following year, and bill us in July, it can be included on the tax bill as a line for County budget.


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		<p>BB – even if we stay with a 12 month schedule, if they billed us monthly or at a different time then the town can better anticipate the increase.</p> <p>Kevin – he thinks that in the past the county was in better financial shape because they invested money for the self-insured healthcare, but that extra is gone now. The reserve accounts also weren’t tightly controlled. He compared us to Washington county (that is in real financial distress) and other counties having issues – Waldo County is NOT like those counties, they are attempting to get transparency and straightening out the funds so we will get out of trouble in the next couple of years.</p> <p>BB – we just need to understand what’s coming in advance Kevin indicated the commissioners are considering having the budget committee meeting more frequently so that more work can be done.</p>
5.	Town Manager report and updates	<p>SLM – during the second week of November Searsport water will be doing phase 2 of work around the Main St. culvert. Just two properties will have auxiliary lines during the week and there should be no widespread disruption. They will do repaving the following week.</p> <p>The paving that George hired out on Cape Jellison and behind the town office is done.</p> <p>Lots of tax money coming in. There were a surprising number of people who came and paid right away despite the extension of the interest free period. We are not in a position to have to borrow money like other nearby towns. Her observations are that people were kind and took it in stride with the staff.</p>
6.	Select board reports	<p>Liz – the waldo county budget committee is taking longer than anticipated so the dates are now going through November and into December. Tentatively looking at December 12 at 6pm for a public hearing at the probate court in Belfast. This may change based on how the budget progresses.</p> <p>SLM – stressed that we do not have a say in the county tax bill unlike the town and the school board budgets. She indicated that that meeting in December is the opportunity to speak about the budget. Folks should attend.</p> <p>BB – the Halloween celebration is planned on 10/31. If it rains the trunk or treat will move inside. The Christmas event and tree lighting will be the Sunday after Thanksgiving (11/30/25).</p> <p>BB – the tech school is doing a “fill the bus” food drive to send food home with the kids once SNAP payments are stopped. It will be next week and the week after, the bus may also be put at the Hannaford lot. She also expects that other schools will be doing food drives and sending food home with students who need it.</p>
7.	Acceptance of General Assistance (GA) maximums and State proposed annual	<p>a. Public Hearing SLM – the State has proposed an ordinance update for GA maximums. The ordinance was posted on the website. If anyone would like to make a statement about why we shouldn’t accept it, they can speak. She recommends we support it.</p> <p>Pat Curley – what would happen if we didn’t approve it? SLM – we’d have to propose another amount Diane Reynolds – we could increase the amount but can’t propose less. We do get 75% reimbursed for the state.</p>

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	<p>ordinance update</p>	<p>BB – if we proposed a higher amount we’d still only get reimbursed at the lower amount. Diane Reynolds– besides GA we have a “keep the heat on” fund which she recommends when folks come in looking for assistance. BB – And we amended that policy last year to make it more accessible.</p> <p>Marsha Shute proposed to close the public hearing and made a motion to accept the GA maximum. Seconded by Liz Lenharr and the motion passed 3-0.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Pirate’s Cove Road town owned tax acquired property sale proposal</p>	<p>a. Vote to approve listing with real estate agent SLM – shared a printed map of the property in Sandy Point area (See map below). If the town keeps it we’ll have to pay into a new resident association fund. It was acquired by the town in the 1990s via tax acquired foreclosure and are looking to sell it via Jim like the other properties mentioned in previous meetings. Need to figure out the back taxes situation, there’s a risk that the back taxes may be so high it exceeds the value of the property. There are 2-3 people in the development who have interest in the property. Based on comps, Jim thinks the assessment is too high. SLM is going to talk to the attorney on how to handle it.</p>  <p>b. Authorize Manager signing closing documents and deeds – This is in relation to the other two properties. The town attorney suggests that rather than all three select members signing all the sales paperwork, they can authorize the town manager to do the signing at the closing (the select board will still select the winning bidder). The attorney also recommends the highest bidder be awarded the bid but he realtor suggests that the select board have the right to award it to the highest bidder with the simplest financing, so as not to hold up the sale unnecessarily.</p>

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		Marsha Shute made a motion to list the Pirates Cove property with the real estate agent and to also authorize the town manager for signing the closing documents and deeds. Liz Lenharr seconded. The vote was unanimous.
9.	Possible animal shelter discussion	SLM – had gotten a call about someone who had concerns about the animal shelter in Bucksport. She suggested that it may be more of a fundraising issue, or to raise awareness about their concerns. The person who raised it didn't come to the meeting so if it comes up later, they will add it to the agenda. This topic was not discussed in the meeting today.
10.	Ron Huber presentation on plastics on the shoreline	Ron was unable to attend due to personal issues. He will come another meeting.
11.	Treasurers warrant	The select board members reviewed the warrant. Marsha Shute made a motion to approve the accounts payable warrant 26 and 86, seconded by Liz Lenharr, motion was approved unanimously. The select board signed the warrant.
12.	Personnel update	SLM – Announced her decision to leave her position as Town Manager at the end of the year, but she can go into January if necessary. She said there's no drama that triggered this decision, it's just that she doesn't feel it is the right fit for her. She has enjoyed working with the great Select Board and the town has good staff. She will work with the select board to find a replacement. It's a hard time for towns and town managers, maybe the hardest it's been for town managers and municipalities – especially with how things are in the world and how things trickle down. She is hopeful they will find a good candidate that will be here long term. She suggests that people try not to make too much of this, especially online. She will continue to ensure things are smooth in the town managers office. This week she will reach out to MMA for a job posting, will pass it in front of the select board for review. It will also go on to the town manager listserv. She suggests reaching out to a recruiter to find a good candidate and to consider someone who may not have town manager experience but perhaps other types of experiencing that would be appropriate for the role.
13.	Open to the Public	Sarah Hardy – The Resilience Committee had a meeting for the town last week and while it was not super well attended we were happy there were attendees. We did share a lot of good information and would like to work with Diane Reynolds on some of the things we learned about from Efficiency Maine since as the General Assistance administrator she's in a good position to recommend programs to people in need. One new program for mobile home heating system replacements seems very promising, as does the zero percent interest loans they offer. The committee is also publishing a newsletter soon and will include some survey questions for residents. SLM – asked to review the newsletter and that was already in the plan – will be provided to her in the next couple of weeks.

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14.	Meeting Adjournment	Marsha Shute made a motion to adjourn at 7:03 pm. Seconded by Liz Lenharr. The motion passed unanimously.
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