

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
VIA ZOOM
MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2026
APPROVED**

Select Board Members Virtually Present: Matt Pisani, Chair; Becky Pine, Vice Chair; Alison Manugian, Clerk; John Reilly;

Select Board Members Absent: Peter Cunningham;

Also Virtually Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair; Brian Callahan, DPW Director; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Bruce Easom, Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Treasurer; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Grace Bannasch, Town Clerk; Tom Delaney, Squannacook River Dam Consultant; Micaela Moore, CPC Administrator.

Chair Pisani called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and reviewed the agenda.

Discussion/Vote- Squannacook River Dam- Consider Submitting an Out-of-Cycle CPA Application to Repair the Squannacook River Dam- Consider Adding a Ballot Question to the 2026 Annual Town Election Seeking a Debt Exclusion of Proposition 2 ½ for the Repair of the Squannacook River Dam.

Mr. Haddad requested this meeting after the Monday, March 9th, Select Board Meeting, when Finance Committee Member Mr. Gary Green asked about applying for funding to repair the dam through an Open Space and Recreation application by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Mr. Haddad thought it wouldn't qualify, but he discussed this proposal the following day with Dunstable Town Administrator Jason Silva. Mr. Silva explained that a dam in the Town of Dunstable was funded with CPA funds as an Open Space and Recreation project to repair the dam. Mr. Haddad stated that it preserved a pond used for recreation. Mr. Bruce Easom, CPC Treasurer, researched this and provided him with information on how other communities successfully obtained CPA funds for both dam repair and removal. Mr. Haddad explained that the CPC out-of-cycle applications have strict rules, but he believes this constitutes an emergency, as the contractor (R. Bates and Sons) will hold the bid price only until the Spring Town Meeting. He is wary of releasing these bids and going back out to bid next year, believing they would come in significantly higher. Some community members are questioning the \$250,000 contingency. Mr. Haddad explained that the \$250,000 is due to the engineer's suggestion that at least a \$150,000 contingency be included; they are concerned about the control of water during construction. Mr. Haddad is recommending an additional \$100,000 to ensure the project can be completed without having to return to a town meeting should an unforeseen matter come to rise. Mr. Haddad asked whether the Board wanted him to pursue an out-of-cycle application to the CPC to repair the Squannacook River Dam to make funds available for the Spring Town Meeting. He explained that there is \$133,000 in the historic bucket and \$9,000 in the unallocated bucket. He said that if this project is done, it would be financed with a bond, and he would request borrowing authorization, with the first payment due in FY 2028. The CPC historic bucket would help pay off the debt service. The maximum amount they could borrow is \$812,500. Mr. Haddad clarified that the CPC's internal policy allows bonding for only one project at a time. He also mentioned that if the Cow Pond Brook Project is approved during the Spring Town Meeting, the CPC might hesitate to undertake another debt-funded project. Mr. Bruce Easom said into the record that he was speaking based

on his personal views and was not speaking for the Community Preservation Committee. He mentioned they would need four votes from the CPC in support of this and believed submitting an application was worth trying. He said the worst they could say was no. Ms. Pine asked if the Open Space and Recreation bucket was a viable option. Mr. Easom said the balance was low because CPC took as much money as they could from there to pay for the Middle School Track. Ms. Manugian stated that there was currently \$0.72 cents left in the Open Space and Recreation bucket. Ms. Pine asked whether it would be possible to take money out of both the Historic and Open Space buckets over the payoff period. Mr. Easom replies that, yes, if there were money available, but the CPC was not in favor of issuing a second bond. He said if four members of the CPC could be convinced, it would be a one-time exception to the policy, and it might be possible. Mr. Haddad said they would need a Town Meeting appropriation to sign any contract for the project. Ms. Manugian does not support submitting an out-of-cycle application at this time for the reasons Mr. Easom highlighted. She believes they need to move forward with the proposed Article to repair the Dam at the Spring Town Meeting. She believes this would complicate the project going to CPC so late in the process. Mr. Reilly agreed with Ms. Manugian and doesn't want to halt the process. If this is a CPC project, it would need a 2/3rds majority vote, which would be challenging. Mr. Haddad explained there were three options for the Select Board:

Option 1: Request the Town Manager to submit an out-of-cycle application to the Community Preservation Committee.

Option 2: Move forward with Article 11 at the 2026 Spring Town Meeting.

Option 3: Remove the Dam article, wait until the fall, go through the CPA process, and return with a proposal at the 2027 Spring Town Meeting.

Ms. Pine sees no downside to inquiring about an out-of-cycle application because it is better for the taxpayers. Mr. Pisani agreed with Ms. Pine that there is no harm in asking the CPC. Mr. Haddad stated that if the Select Board decides to place a question on the ballot, he would need to submit it to the Town Clerk at least 35 days before May 19th. Mr. Easom said the CPC is meeting on March 23rd and explained the out-of-cycle application process. Ms. Manugian was uncomfortable with the position they are putting the CPC in and was concerned that this would endanger the Cow Pond Brook Project at the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Robertson explained that the simplest option is to use CPC funds, which will result in debt regardless of the funding source. The most cost-effective choice is CPA funds; if they are not approved, they will need to use excluded debt. Mr. Haddad stressed the importance of submitting the out-of-cycle application and, if the request is denied, proceeding with debt exclusion, allowing enough time to place a debt exclusion question on the Annual Town Election Ballot. He requested that the Board authorize the submission of an out-of-cycle application and for consideration by the CPC at their March 23rd meeting. He will attend the CPC meeting to seek their approval for the out-of-cycle application and the project. If they decline, he will return to the Select Board and request that a ballot question be placed on the May 19th election.

Ms. Pine made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to submit the out-of-cycle CPC application for the repair of the dam. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine – aye; Manugian – nay; Reilly – aye; Pisani – aye.

The Select Board adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.