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By Lisa Vivar at 12:42 pm, Nov 19, 2026

MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2026
7:00 P.M.

83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting

Selectmen present: Colin Moll, Klaire Bielonko, Kathy Dunai, Pete Hill and Kathleen Harrington

Also in attendance: Kevin Goff – Permanent Building Commission Chairman (Via Zoom), Glen Neilson – Permanent Building Commission Vice-Chairman, Matt Dunbar – Superintendent, Eric Remington – Business Manager, Lee Corbert – Director of Public Works, Brian Gauthier – Fire Chief, Dan Vindigni – Fire Commissioner and Scott Pellman – Senior Project Consultant, Colliers Project Leaders

First Selectman Moll called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked everyone to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Discussion and approval of the minutes from the November 5, 2026 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Selectman Harrington MOTIONED to approve the minutes from the November 5, 2026 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen with one change as noted:

1) Delete the final sentence of the second paragraph on page 3 under the public information session section as it is both repetitive and incomplete. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and approval to establish a Veterans Memorial Task Force

First Selectman Moll explained that while the original Veterans Memorial Committee had completed its primary charge of approving names for the local veteran's monument, occasional applications continue to be received. He noted that former Committee Chairman Dave Gauthier requested the creation of a smaller task force to review newly submitted applications against the eligibility criteria previously adopted by the original committee. Mr. Gauthier and original committee member Bill Moryto have volunteered to serve on the Task Force.

Selectman Dunai MOTIONED to establish a Veterans Memorial Task Force. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Continued discussion of facility recommendations by the Permanent Building Commission:

a. Middle School

The board continued its evaluation of educational facility needs with Superintendent Dunbar and Business Manager Eric Remington. The administration presented an alternative proposal to relocate the Board of Education Central Office into a separate 6,400-square-foot commercial building on Mountain Road rather than constructing new administrative space within the proposed middle school complex. Mr. Remington detailed that purchasing and renovating the standalone facility represents an estimated gross savings of $2 million, yielding a net savings of approximately $1.2 million after accounting for expected state reimbursements.

The central office layout would accommodate administrative and technology support personnel, though major physical hardware and network servers would remain distributed across school facilities. The administration confirmed that an elevator installation is included in the project cost estimates to guarantee full public accessibility and meet state reimbursement criteria. The Board of Selectmen also reviewed the status of the existing middle school gymnasium, reaching consensus that retaining the current gym structure provides valuable community and athletic space alongside any new school construction.

In response to the selectmen's inquiries regarding municipal budget targets, school officials addressed a proposed 2.5 percent annual operating budget growth guideline. Superintendent Dunbar and Mr. Remington expressed reluctance to commit to an absolute percentage cap, citing non-discretionary cost drivers beyond local control. These include rising healthcare trends averaging double-digit increases, mandatory special education outplacements where a single move-in student can require $200,000 in unbudgeted tuition, state arbitration rules, fuel price volatility, and evolving state educational mandates. Mr. Dunbar and Mr. Remington affirmed their commitment to rigorous fiscal discipline while cautioning against rigid caps that could compromise core instructional services.

b. Fire House 1

The board conducted a continued discussion regarding municipal facility recommendations submitted by the Permanent Building Commission. Fire Chief Dave Gauthier and Fire Commission member Dan Vindigni, representing the Fire Commission, joined the board to present details on the proposed new firehouse facility. Chief Gauthier described substantial organizational progress, active volunteer growth, and heightened department morale, while emphasizing that the existing 60-year-old station lacks necessary office space, equipment storage, adequate training areas, and modern decontamination infrastructure.

The full project is estimated at approximately $17.8 million and features four apparatus bays and an 800-square-foot training and lecture room. Chief Gauthier explained that evaluated cutbacks—such as removing one apparatus bay to save approximately 1,000 square feet and eliminating the dedicated training room to save a total of $1.7 million—were not recommended. Modifying the design to three bays would yield marginal net savings when factored over the projected 50-year lifespan of the building, while restricting long-term expansion and operational flexibility. He explained that the fourth apparatus bay is designed to house response vehicles such as the ladder truck—currently stored at Station Two—or primary rescue and squad units. Storing key apparatus at the main station supports planned volunteer shift coverage, streamlines response protocols, and improves overall deployment efficiency. Chief Gauthier also highlighted critical health and safety features incorporated into the new design, including a streamlined turnout gear flow path, separate living quarters, and a dedicated gear storage room equipped with a negative pressure ventilation system to isolate carcinogens and hazardous particulates. Board members reviewed the information presented and requested further review prior to making any final decisions.

Discussion

Following the presentation of facility reports, the Board of Selectmen engaged in detailed deliberations regarding project prioritization, financial feasibility, and referendum strategy. First Selectman Moll and the board expressed unanimous consensus to move both major capital projects—the new firehouse facility and the middle school project featuring the 6,400-square-foot standalone central office alternative and retained gym—forward to a public referendum.

The selectmen noted that delaying the firehouse project by five years would escalate construction costs by an estimated $1.2 million or more, whereas Board of Finance modeling indicated that the average annual tax impact difference between a simultaneous versus staggered project schedule is approximately $150 per year. To optimize project affordability for taxpayers, the board directed that minor scope refinements for the fire station be evaluated prior to finalizing bond resolutions. Scott Pellman, Senior Project Consultant from Colliers, advised the board on the steps necessary to finalize tax impact calculations, engage bond counsel, draft referendum resolutions, and explore state reimbursement opportunities, including potential space waivers. The board agreed to schedule upcoming public information sessions once final financial models and ballot questions are fully articulated

Public Comment

Sandra Janik – 380 Prospect Street
Annie Hornish – 864 Thrall Avenue
Kevin Goff, Permanent Building Commission Chairman – 475 Thompsonville Road

Selectman Updates

Windsor Locks Canal Trail

The Connecticut Department of Transportation has committed to full funding, totaling approximately $2.5 million, for the paved asphalt construction of the Windsor Locks Canal Trail.

Mapleton Avenue Sidewalk

Construction work along the Mapleton sidewalk corridor is actively under way.

High School Bridge Project

Repair work on the bridge connecting the High School and Spaulding School is scheduled to begin within the next month.

Municipal Emergency Radio Project

The town-wide emergency communications upgrade is approaching completion, with full system go-live projected within 1 to 2 months

Clarification on Municipal Financial Reserves and Tax Modeling

First Selectman Moll addressed public comment questions regarding town fiscal health, clarifying that current financial modeling projects a near net-zero tax impact relative to standard year-over-year adjustments. He reassured the board and public that the proposed financing plans do not deplete

emergency contingency funds. Instead, the strategy utilizes Capital Non-Recurring (CNR) reserves tucked away over the preceding five years specifically to absorb major capital facility costs.

Board of Finance & Permanent Building Commission

The selectmen praised the fiscal foresight of the Board of Finance as well as the specialized expertise of the Permanent Building Commission, emphasizing that the PBC consists of qualified engineers, builders, and contractors whose technical recommendations carry substantial weight.

SVAA 50th Anniversary

The Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association (SVAA) is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a sold-out Saturday night gala, extending congratulations and appreciation for their service.

Adjournment

Selectman Dunai MOTIONED to adjourn at 8:09 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary