



FAIRHAVEN SELECT BOARD

Meeting Minutes November 24, 2025

FAIRHAVEN TOWN CLERK
RCUD 2025 DEC 2 AM 9:42

Present: Charles Murphy Sr., Andrew Romano, Natalie A. Mello, Keith Silvia, Andrew B. Saunders and Keith R. Hickey

Mr. Murphy opened the Select Board meeting at 6:30pm

A moment of silence was observed to reflect on Thanksgiving blessings, remember those lost or who may be facing hardships and to give thanks for the community.

Mr. Murphy congratulated the Fairhaven High School Blue Devils on going to the Super Bowl for a third year in a row.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tara Dwelly of John Street addressed the Board with a statement about the constructive approval, failure of elected officials, the importance of being involved in Town affairs and asked for an external investigation regarding the constructive approval of the Timothy/Hiller subdivision.

Kevin Grant of Fort Street addressed the Board as a resident and not as a Planning Board member. He asked for an external, third-party investigation of the Timothy/Hiller subdivision and said the cost to investigate is dwarfed by the potential cost of litigation and people deserve answers.

Jennifer Carter of Paul Street addressed the Board; she is a direct abutter and has many questions on the matter. She is very proud of her neighborhood and asked the Board to vote for an external investigation. Never in the Town's history has a constructive approval happened and it should be investigated.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to take item C3 out of order. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

ACTION/DISCUSSION

Consider Conducting an Investigation for the Failure of the Town to Act on the Timothy-Hiller Subdivision Plans Resulting in a "Constructive Approval"

Mr. Hickey addressed the Board regarding the constructive approval of the Timothy-Hiller Subdivision and apologized for Town staff not bringing this project forward. He has met and spoken with abutters and residents to understand the concerns. Processes have been put in place to prevent something like this from happening in the future. In meeting with the developer, their attorney and Town Counsel, the developer has agreed to additional terms and compliance with as many bylaws as possible.

Mr. Hickey said the Public Works Superintendent has also reviewed concerns about smells from the Wastewater Treatment facility and advised that the smells are due, in part, to the plant upgrade and anticipates a significant decrease by July of 2026 as the work progresses.

Discussion ensued as to how to proceed on the matter, potential outcomes and how the results would be handled, releasing a redacted report, whether action could be taken with elected officials, transparency in any investigation, concerns on future budget deficits of one and a half to four million dollars, Mr. Hickey's time will be focused on the budget and concerns on the overall cost and timeline of an investigation. The Board's consensus was for an external investigation, estimated costs are between six and ten thousand dollars. Mr. Hickey recommended Town Counsel not be involved in selecting an investigator and will report back an estimated timeline.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to request the Town Administrator contract to have an external investigation conducted with different outside counsel to determine the sequence of events that occurred from the date the Timothy-Hiller subdivision plans were accepted by the Town of Fairhaven to the date when the plans received

constructive approval due to a Planning Board decision not being made. Ms. Mello seconded.

Bob Espindola of John Street asked the Board to consider not limiting the start date in their motion. Mr. Hickey suggested a revision to the motion. Mr. Saunders rescinded his motion and Ms. Mello rescinded her second.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to request the Town Administrator contract to have an external investigation conducted with different outside counsel to determine the sequence of events that occurred from on or before the date the Timothy-Hiller subdivision plans were accepted by the Town of Fairhaven to the date when the plans received constructive approval due to a Planning Board decision not being made. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

APPOINTMENTS AND COMMUNITY ITEMS

Assessors: Tax Rate Presentation and Set Rate

Mr. Hickey reviewed the 2026 Tax Rate Presentation prepared by former Assessor Joanne Correia (*Attachment A*). The Board asked clarifying questions about the rate, calculation, proposition two-and-a-half constraints, the average increase residents would see, comparison to the 2025 rate (*Attachment B*), how the Board has voted in the past on the residential exemption and small business exemption.

Discussion ensued about the residential tax shift and that “savings” (slide 3 of *Attachment A*) means a portion is shifted to the commercial rate. Massachusetts’ towns’ revenue sources like the Cherry sheets are not being given to municipalities at the same proportion and asking the state to use the rainy-day fund interest to help towns because shortfalls will result in cuts to staff, teachers and services.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to adopt the shift of 1.75 resulting in a residential factor of 88.38 for 2026. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Mr. Murphy confirmed the Board would not adopt a residential exemption or small business exemption and no votes were taken on them.

ACTION/DISCUSSION

Consider Member Removal Request: Sustainability Committee: Susan Spooner

Mr. Romano explained the request to remove a member from the Sustainability Committee.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to remove Susan Spooner from the Sustainability Committee. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Consider Appointing a Select Board Representative for a Hiring Panel for Principal Assessor and Planner

Mr. Hickey advised the Board that he is seeking a member or two members to participate in an interview committee for the positions of Principal Assessor and Planner. He clarified it can be one member for both or one for each depending on the Board. Brief discussion ensued about interest.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to appoint Andrew Romano as Select Board Representative to the interview committee for Principal Assessor. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to appoint Natalie Mello as Select Board Representative to the interview committee for Planner. Mr. Romano seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Mr. Romano asked if both positions had been advertised and if Land Use Director was changing back to a Planner and Conservation Agent. Mr. Hickey will confirm the job postings and said the Conservation Coordinator is looking at budget impacts of completing training to step into the Conservation Agent role. Mr. Hickey will send the Board the salary and job description changes.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Mr. Hickey reviewed his report (*Attachment C*). The department deadline for submitting Capital Improvement

Plan requests was extended to allow departments to include additional details.

Mr. Romano reminded the Board that he had asked for a follow-up on solar at a previous meeting as a alternative to the wind turbines and advised the Board he would like to attend future Kearsarge Solar meetings with the Town Administrator. Mr. Murphy said the Board did not appear to object but could not vote on this tonight.

Mr. Hickey added that he has asked the Building Commissioner to review his report on the decision and justification of the request from Fairhaven Wind with Town Counsel and confirm next steps.

Mr. Hickey read a memo from Discover Fairhaven about the upcoming Olde-Tyme Holiday on December 13, 2025 (*Attachment D*). He added that he will be in Foxboro to see the Fairhaven Football Team in the Super Bowl.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS / COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Saunders had no meetings to report on

Ms. Mello had no meetings to report on.

- Shout-out to all those who participated in the recent Veterans Day events, activities, the parade and for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Murphy reported:

- Thank you to Ms. Mello for her heartfelt words on Veterans Day and gave Mr. Hickey a proclamation from the governor for Veterans Day.
- Lagoa Friendship Pact Committee met at the same time as the Board, no report
- The Sister City Committee met to debrief about the Manjiro Festival and protocol for future events.
- He reminded everyone that there are many events for Thanksgiving like the Turkey Trot and Fairhaven vs. Dartmouth football game. There are also meals available for free and a place to go, check resources if you need a place to go for a meal.

Mr. Romano reported:

- Thank you to Chief Correia and Harbormaster Cox for the blessing of the new boat today and thanks to the County Commissioners.
- Sustainability met, anyone with a pumpkin to get rid of can take it to any of the community gardens at the schools to be composted. They are looking into an “adopt-a-drain” program to help with unclogging the sewer drains.
- SRPEDD will meet in December
- The Friends of Jack Foundation raises money for Children’s Hospitals and has an annual red tutu challenge and asked the Board and TA to participate at the next meeting.

Mr. Silvia reported:

- The Commission on Disability met and volunteer Christin Ritz offered to create a native garden that is accessible.

MINUTES

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to accept the Open Session minutes of November 10 and 19, 2025. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Ms. Mello asked for an additional correction to the September 30, 2025 minutes as she was not in attendance. The office will review the minutes and this item was tabled until the December 1, 2025 meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Blog Post: Frank Haggerty: Massachusetts Wind Turbines: Harbingers of Death

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to enter the Select Board correspondence as listed into the record. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next meeting will be on Monday, December 1, 2025 at 6:00pm.
- Mr. Murphy thanked residents, volunteers, and staff who work every day to strengthen the community and for their engagement, kindness, and commitment to the Town. He wished everyone a safe, peaceful, and happy Thanksgiving.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to enter Executive Session pursuant to Open Meeting Law (Chapter 30A Section 21 (a)(3)) - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – Police Union; AND pursuant to Open Meeting Law (Chapter 30A Section 21 (a)(3)) - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and not to return to open session. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Romano and Mr. Silvia in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 7:42pm

ATTACHMENTS

- A. 2026 Tax Rate Presentation
- B. Tax Rate Comparison Grid
- C. Town Administrator Report
- D. Discover Fairhaven Olde-Tyme Holiday Memo
- E. Correspondence: Blog Post: Frank Haggerty: Massachusetts Wind Turbines: Harbingers of Death

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Select Board Clerk (ah)

Accepted on December 1, 2025

Tax Classification Hearing

FAIRHAVEN SELECTBOARD

Four Items to Vote On:

Tax Rate Shift

Open Space Discount – No Open Space in Fairhaven

Residential Exemption – Currently not adopted

Small Business Exemption – Currently not adopted

Impact of Tax Shift

Residential Tax Examples:

| Value | Single Tax Rate Bill | Adopted Shift Tax Bill | Savings |
|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|----------|
| \$200,000 | \$2,086.00 | \$1,844.00 | \$242.00 |
| \$300,000 | \$3,129.00 | \$2,766.00 | \$363.00 |
| \$400,000 | \$4,172.00 | \$3,688.00 | \$484.00 |
| \$500,000 | \$5,215.00 | \$4,610.00 | \$605.00 |

Open Space Discount

There is no property within the Town that is classified as Open Space.

Residential Exemption

The Select Board may grant a residential exemption to all Class One, Residential properties that are the principal residence of the taxpayer. The Town of Fairhaven has not adopted a residential exemption in the past.

Small Business/Commercial Exemption

The Select Board may grant a small commercial exemption to Commercial properties that are occupied by businesses with an average annual employment of no more than 10 people and an assessed valuation of less than \$1,000,000. The Town of Fairhaven has not adopted a small commercial exemption in past years.

APPOINTMENTS AND COMMUNITY ITEMS

Assessors: Tax Rate Presentation and Set Rate: Former Assessor Joanne Correia will present details regarding the Board of Assessors recommended 2026 property tax rate. Included in your Board materials is a memo from the Board of Assessors summarizing their recommendation. Below is a summary of the 2025 and 2026 residential and commercial tax rates along with the average single-family home property taxes. As you will see, the proposed tax rate has decreased, however the average property tax bill will increase by \$146 annually. That is due to the average home value increasing by \$21,000.

| Tax Year | Residential Tax Rate | Commercial Tax Rate | Average Single Family Home Value | Average Single Family Home Property Taxes |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| 2025 | \$9.32 | \$18.49 | \$454,252 | \$4,233 |
| 2026 | \$9.20 | \$18.22 | \$475,941 | \$4,379 |



Town of Fairhaven
Report of the Town Administrator
November 24, 2025

Financial Updates

- Department head Capital Improvement Plan requests are due Wednesday, November 26th. Finance Director Anne Carreiro and I will review the requests and prepare a report for the Capital Planning Committee to begin their review.

Project Updates

- As a follow up to the comments made at the November 10th Town Administrator report regarding water quality, BPW Director Vinnie Furtado has indicated that flushing will be completed prior to the next water and sewer bill being issued this winter and users should notice an improvement in the water quality in being provided. If the water quality has not improved prior to the next water and sewer bill being issued, Mr. Furtado will consider including an explanation of the water improvement project with the billing.
- The ongoing wastewater plant upgrade has caused an increase in the sulfur odor in the vicinity of the plant. This increased odor will dissipate in the coming months as the project progresses.

Personnel Update

- Interested candidates have submitted their documentation of the Assessor position. Interviews will occur in early December.

Miscellaneous Updates

- The Zoning Board will hold a special meeting on December 11th to hear an appeal on the building/driveway permits issued on the Windmill Acres subdivision.
- At the Board of Health's November 20th meeting, the Board voted to reconsider their prior vote to require the turbines to be shut down for two hours in the morning and another two hours in the afternoon citing the need for verifiable data that supports the health concerns raised by residents in the area.
- The Superior Court dismissed New England Preservation and Development's latest appeal regarding the acquisition of the Rogers School
- The photo contest for the 2025 Annual Report is now open. Please submit no more than two photos to the Select Board's Office electronically by January 7th to ahart@fairhaven-ma.gov for consideration.
- The Town Offices will close at noon, November 26th for Thanksgiving.



DISCOVER FAIRHAVEN
(COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE)
Town of Fairhaven
40 Center Street
Fairhaven, MA 02719



Memo: Olde-Tyme Holiday Village 2025 Announcement
For Select Board Meeting & Town Administrator Weekly Video Update

As we head into the holiday season, the Town of Fairhaven is pleased to share details about our annual Olde-Tyme Holiday Village, a tradition that has brought joy to residents and visitors since 1998. This year's celebration will take place on Saturday, December 13th, 2025, with events and activities spread throughout the heart of Fairhaven.

Community landmarks including Fairhaven Town Hall, the Millicent Library, the First Congregational Church, the Unitarian Memorial Church, Northeast Maritime Institute's Integrity Hall, and the George H. Taber Masonic Lodge will all open their doors for a full day of festivities.

Attendees can look forward to artisan shopping, luncheons, food trucks, sweet treats, pony rides, live music, chestnut roasting, and of course—visits with Santa. The entire Village transforms into an immersive, nostalgic holiday experience, offering timeless charm and activities for all ages.

We encourage the community to explore the full schedule of events and plan their day by visiting DiscoverFairhaven.org, the official site of the Town's Office of Tourism, Community & Economic Development.

We look forward to welcoming everyone as we celebrate the season and create magical holiday memories together in Fairhaven.

Massachusetts Wind Turbines: Harbingers of Death

1 message

fnhaggerty@aol.com <fnhaggerty@aol.com>

Sun, Nov 9, 2025 at 12:06 PM

To: "BOH@Fairhaven-ma.gov" <BOH@fairhaven-ma.gov>, "selectboard@fairhaven-ma.gov" <selectboard@fairhaven-ma.gov>

Cc: "khickey@fairhaven-ma.gov" <khickey@fairhaven-ma.gov>, "cmurphy@fairhaven-ma.gov" <cmurphy@fairhaven-ma.gov>, "aromano@fairhaven-ma.gov" <aromano@fairhaven-ma.gov>, "namello@fairhaven-ma.gov" <namello@fairhaven-ma.gov>, "ksilvia@fairhaven-ma.gov" <ksilvia@fairhaven-ma.gov>, "asaunders@fairhaven-ma.gov" <asaunders@fairhaven-ma.gov>

Subject: Massachusetts Wind Turbines: Harbingers of Death

Massachusetts Wind Turbines: Harbingers of Death

November 9, 2025

<https://www.windtaskforce.org/profiles/blogs/massachusetts-wind-turbines-harbingers-of-death>

Massachusetts has had two large wind turbine blade accidents in the past year. The Plymouth blade failure, and at this time last year, the Vineyard Wind blade was still hanging off a turbine. The Vineyard blade spewed 60 tons of foam, fiberglass, and microplastics over a multistate area, ending Nantucket vacations and property values.

The news media, within days of the recent Plymouth accident, reported "experts say" this is a rare event. How quickly the wind advocates, aka the media, forget that over one hundred blades are defective on the Vineyard project. In Massachusetts, blade accidents average one per year.

Reports say it's a good thing Plymouth wind turbines are located in a rural area, and there is nothing wrong with the cranberries in the bog. Massachusetts is the most urbanized state in the US. If the blade had gone in a different direction, it could have killed someone.

Wind turbines in Massachusetts are known as noise machines. Neighbors report sleep disturbance, dizziness, headaches, and stress, which they attribute to the noise and low-frequency sound or infrasound. The Town of Falmouth never disclosed to residents before the installation of turbines that they were warned in writing that the turbines generate 110 decibels of noise.

Both local, state, and federal officials prioritize the Green agenda over the health of residential neighborhoods. The state also does not maintain a dedicated, independent database for wind turbine accidents or safety. The goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 remains the state's primary focus.

Offshore wind contractors spend hundreds of millions of dollars to get their permits. US taxpayers pay up to 40 percent of the project costs in renewable energy credits and another 10 percent for building ocean wind ports. The expenses incurred by the contractors are not available to the public.

Wind companies pay fines to back out of project power agreements, donations, grants to science/research groups, political contributions, local town events, and media advertising. To put it bluntly, everybody got a bag of money.

One example is that scientists say offshore wind construction does not kill whales, and places that do necropsies never say a whale that is deafened by offshore wind died as a result of offshore wind. The news media never ask these scientists or experts if they or their employers have ever received resources from offshore wind companies. A deaf whale is a dead whale.

It's time to stop the wind turbine insanity. The turbines are intermittent sources of energy requiring high-voltage direct current converter stations, massive battery backup, and fossil fuel power plants.

Massachusetts has 70 land-based wind turbines. It's time for statewide inspections before someone dies.

