



FAIRHAVEN SELECT BOARD

Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2026

FAIRHAVEN TOWN CLERK
RCUD 2026 MAR 24 AM 9:01

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

Present via zoom: Andrew Romano, joined Open Session at 8:15pm

Mr. Murphy opened the Select Board meeting at 6:02pm

A moment of silence was observed for the US service members killed in the initial days of the current military strikes against Iran, their families and for the protection and safe return of all American troops deployed to the region.

Mr. Murphy advised that Mr. Romano will join Open Session remotely after Executive Session.

ACTION / DISCUSSION

Consider Lifting the State of Emergency in Fairhaven

The Board discussed the need for declaring a state of emergency in Town during the storm and the initial recovery efforts and was in consensus that it should be lifted. Ms. Mello asked for an agenda item to conduct an after-storm action review. Mr. Hickey advised the Board that the storm and Town response was discussed at the Department Head meeting today, acknowledged the challenges faced by many residents and communities, the frustration and patience with the storm clean-up efforts and will add a review to the next agenda.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to lift the State of Emergency in Fairhaven. Ms. Mello seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0-0).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to enter Executive Session Pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(1) to discuss results of complaints regarding the constructive approval of the Timothy/Hiller Subdivision under the Former Land Use & Planning Director; **and**, pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation where an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the board and the chair so declares (Jodi Donahue v. Fairhaven Police Department, 2533CV000869 New Bedford District Court); **and**, pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares (Police Memorandum of Agreement); **and**, pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to comply with or act under the authority of the Public Records Law (Discuss confidential Fire Department personnel investigation report) **and to return to Open Session.** Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy and Mr. Silvia in favor. The motion passed unanimously (4-0-0).

The Select Board adjourned to Executive Session from 6:12pm to 8:15pm

Mr. Romano joined Open Session via Zoom at 8:15pm

ACTION / DISCUSSION

Discussion on the Release of Documents Related to the Timothy-Hiller Subdivision Constructive Approval Investigation

Mr. Murphy clarified that the Board would vote to waive attorney client privilege only on the portion that pertains to the Executive Summary report prepared by legal counsel regarding the Timothy Hiller Subdivision constructive approval.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to waive the attorney/client privilege to release the Executive Summary Report prepared by legal counsel regarding the Timothy-Hiller Subdivision Constructive Approval. Ms. Mello seconded.

Bob Espindola addressed the Board via Zoom and asked if the Board would be complete on the item and discuss the rest of the elements of the report that were provided. He asked if the Board would explain why the other portion would not be released. Mr. Murphy said the Board would only be releasing the Executive Summary and not discuss further.

On the Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to waive the attorney/client privilege to release the Executive Summary Report prepared by legal counsel regarding the Timothy-Hiller Subdivision Constructive Approval. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Silvia and Mr. Romano in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Mr. Hickey advised the Board that he would have the Executive Summary posted on the Town's website tomorrow and the Board agreed.

Consider a Stipend for Town Collector Pam Bettencourt

Mr. Hickey addressed the Board about Collector Pam Bettencourt. Ms. Bettencourt was set to retire effective February 20, 2026 and due to staffing challenges within the office, she has agreed to remain in her position to provide critical training and support to the Treasurer/Collector Department staff. Because Ms. Bettencourt provided an advanced retirement notice, an annual retirement bonus stipend of two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) was provided and stopped at her retirement date. Mr. Hickey is requesting the Select Board approve continuing the weekly stipend request of \$48.08 per week while Ms. Bettencourt remains a full-time employee.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to approve the stipend of forty-eight dollars and eight cents (\$48.08) per week for Pamela Bettencourt while she remains employed full time to recognize her dedication to the Town of Fairhaven. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Silvia and Mr. Romano in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Parking Fee Waiver Request: Hoppy's Landing: All Abilities Fishing Derby on Friday, June 19, 2026 from 12:00-3:00pm

The Recreation Center organized the 3rd Annual All Abilities Fishing Derby at Hoppy's Landing and is requesting a waiver of the parking fees for participants during the event. The Harbormaster has supported this event in the past and is in favor of the parking fee waiver for event participants. The Harbormaster's staff will prepare a parking pass for participants to display on their dashboard during the event which was done for last year's event.

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to approve the Parking Fee Waiver Request at Hoppy's Landing for the 3rd Annual All Abilities Fishing Derby on Friday, June 19, 2026 from 12:00-3:00pm as presented. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Silvia and Mr. Romano in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Espindola of John Street addressed the Board via Zoom and asked if the Board would explain why the whole report is not able to be released to the public, even redacted.

MINUTES

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to accept the open session minutes of February 2 and February 9, 2026 as presented. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Silvia and Mr. Romano in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to accept the executive session minutes of February 2 and February 9, 2026 as presented. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Silvia and Mr. Romano in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

CORRESPONDENCE

Emails: Michelle Costen: Ref: Citizens Petition Submitted; Public Comment-Ref 2/9/2026 SB Meeting; MGL c. 44 s. 55 quick notes; Fwd.: Affordable Home Ownership-Domino Effect; From the White House-21st century Housing Act; Reference to zoning delays-PB meeting 2/10/26 public comment; FWD: MAHT; Home Sweet Home

Committee; and (no subject) (*Attachment A*).

Motion: Mr. Saunders motioned to enter the Select Board correspondence as listed into the record. Ms. Mello seconded. Roll Call Vote. Mr. Saunders, Ms. Mello, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Silvia and Mr. Romano in favor. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Mr. Romano addressed the Board via Zoom and said that he was not on for the first item and wanted to give a shout out to the citizens, the Belonging Committee and other committees that orchestrated snow removal at bus stops and sidewalks.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled Select Board meeting will be on *Monday, March 9, 2026* at 6:30pm

Mr. Murphy added a final thought and the quote, "Every day brings new choices." From Martha Beck

Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Correspondence: Emails: Michelle Costen: Ref: Citizens Petition Submitted; Public Comment-Ref 2/9/2026 SB Meeting; MGL c. 44 s. 55 quick notes; Fwd.: Affordable Home Ownership-Domino Effect; From the White House-21st century Housing Act; Reference to zoning delays-PB meeting 2/10/26 public comment; FWD: MAHT; Home Sweet Home Committee; and (no subject)

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

Accepted on March 23, 2026



ELISABETH E. HORAN
TOWN CLERK

TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE FAIRHAVEN, MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL · 40 CENTER STREET · FAIRHAVEN, MA 02719
TELEPHONE: 508-979-4023 · EMAIL: CLERK@FAIRHAVEN-MA.GOV

MEMO

To: Select Board
From: Elisabeth E. Horan, Town Clerk *EEH*
Date: February 18, 2026
Re: 2026 Annual Town Election

Honorable Select Board:

I am writing to request that you take action relative to our Annual Town Election. If you would kindly add this to your next Select Board meeting agenda.

CALLING FOR THE ELECTION & SETTING THE DATE:

Attached is the Public Notice for the Select Board to call and set the date for the next Annual Town Election on Tuesday, June 9, 2026.

Once adopted and signed, please return the original Public Notice to my office so that it may be posted in accordance with MGL. Ch.41 § 10.

Nomination papers will be available the first business day in March, which will be Monday, March 2, 2026 at 8:30 am.

A proposed motion is included for your convenience.

Proposed Motion:

I hereby move that the Select Board set the date and call for the next Annual Town Election to be held on Tuesday, June 9, 2026 for the following positions and term lengths:

- Two **Select Board** Members - 3-year term
- Two **Planning Board** Members - 3-year term
- One **Planning Board** Member - 2-year term
- Two **School Committee** Members - 3-year term
- One **School Committee** Member - 1-year term
- One **Board of Health** Member - 3-year term
- Two **Board of Public Works** Members - 3-year term
- One **Commissioner of Trust Funds** Member- 3-year term
- One **Housing Authority** Member – 5-year term
- **Precinct One - Town Meeting Members** – Number of open seats to be determined*
- **Precinct Two - Town Meeting Members** – Number of open seats to be determined*

- **Precinct Three - Town Meeting Members** – Number of open seats to be determined*
- **Precinct Four - Town Meeting Members** – Number of open seats to be determined*
- **Precinct Five - Town Meeting Members** – Number of open seats to be determined*
- **Precinct Six - Town Meeting Members** – Number of open seats to be determined*

**In accordance with Section 2 of Chapter 285 of the Acts of 1930 and amendments thereto establishing in the Town of Fairhaven Representative Town Government by Limited Town Meeting.*