

**SELECTBOARD DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**  
**JAN. 20, 2026 – 7 P.M.**  
**HYBRID ON ZOOM AND SOUTH HADLEY SENIOR CENTER**

*Present in person were Chair Jeff Cyr, Vice Chair Nicole Casolari, Clerk Carol Constant, member Andrea Miles, member Renee Sweeney, and Town Administrator Lisa Wong.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Cyr called to meeting to order at 7 p.m.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS / PUBLIC COMMENT**

Constant reminded folks who celebrated the recent holidays with a Christmas tree that those trees can be dropped off at the transfer station during regular hours (Tuesday-Saturday, 8 a.m.- 12 p.m. and 1- 3 p.m.) with no reservation needed throughout the month of January. Or residents can hang onto the tree in their backyard for the spring curbside yard waste collection in April, cut to four-foot lengths only.

Miles noted Police Chief Jennifer Gundersen will next hold office hours for community members to stop by and share questions, concerns, or suggestions on Jan. 29, from 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m. at the Council on Aging.

Casolari said nomination papers are now available for the April 14, 2026 annual town election. The deadline to pick up nomination papers is Friday, Feb. 20.

She also reminded folks that annual census forms will be mailed to every residence this month. Returning the census keeps registered voters on the active voter list. The data is also used for grant applications, creating the annual street list, helping the school district project upcoming enrollment, and connecting veterans and surviving spouses with the veterans agent.

Casolari also reminded folks that dog license renewal season is here and ends March 31. Residents can contact the town clerk's office for assistance.

Sweeney highlighted Fuel Assistance and said applications are now being processed. The window runs until April 30. All allotted funds must be spent by that date, so applying as soon as possible is paramount. Contact the senior center for more information.

**MINUTES**

Constant motioned to approve the draft minutes of Jan. 6, 2026. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

**SPECIAL MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES**

Constant motioned to designate the Board of Assessors and the School Committee as Special Municipal Employees in accordance with MGL c. 268A. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

## **MMA VOTING REP**

Constant motioned to designate Chuck Romboletti as the voting representative for South Hadley at the 2026 Mass Municipal Conference. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

## **SELECTBOARD MEETING SCHEDULE**

The board suggested Sept. 8 & 22 and Nov. 10 & 24 as updated meeting dates due to elections. They will officially set those dates following the April reorganization.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE**

Final rate recommendations for FY27 will be made by HCGIT on Feb. 25. Seven towns have committed to joining the GIC. An analysis of the GIC plans showed it would cost both the town and employees more. Towns leaving the trust are responsible for their own run-out claims.

## **BUDGET UPDATE**

The town is actively pursuing cost controls, new revenue and regional/state advocacy but difficult service and staffing decisions may be unavoidable without new funding sources. Members discussed free cash and reviewed override scenarios (\$3M, \$6M, and \$9M), noting that a \$3M override would still result in significant service cuts, while larger overrides would better stabilize services but carry greater taxpayer impact. Members emphasized the importance of clear messaging to the public, careful timing of decisions, and ensuring that budget discussions prior to Town Meeting assume a budget without an override until the April election outcome is known.

## **TOWN MEETING REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT REVIEW**

Members reviewed recommendations from the Town Meeting Review Committee regarding governance, transparency and public engagement. They discussed improving communication with Town Meeting members and the public through clearer reporting, updated webpages, use of precinct captains, surveys and info sessions. Member concerns included meeting length, member fatigue and statutory constraints.

## **SELECTBOARD ACTION PLAN REVIEW**

Members discussed the FY27 budget outlook, override timing and planning constraints. They emphasized the need for clear public messaging, alignment with the February decision timeline, and continued evaluation of cost containment, staffing impacts, and long-term financial sustainability. Wong noted South Hadley is hosting a Western Massachusetts municipal budget roundtable focused on health insurance costs, local revenue challenges and coordinated policy advocacy on Feb. 6.

## **TA REPORT**

For the full TA report, see the Jan. 20. 2026 Selectboard packet.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Casolari motioned to enter into Executive Session pursuant to Open Meeting Law (Chapter 30A Section 21 (a)(3)) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining strategy for Units A & B (and the Chair so declares it) and to not return to open session.

**Roll Call Vote**

- Sweeney – Aye
- Casolari – Aye
- Constant – Aye
- Miles - Aye
- Cyr – Aye

All in favor. Unanimous. The board entered into at 9:34 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Kristin Maher  
Executive Assistant to Administration**