

**SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
FEB. 3, 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, members Andrea Miles and Renee Sweeney, Town Administrator Lisa Wong and Assistant Town Administrator Chuck Romboletti.

CALL TO ORDER

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS / OPEN FORUM

Sweeney noted the South Hadley Democratic Town Committee annual caucus on Saturday, March 7. Constant encouraged folks to watch video archives on the SHCTV15 website of the Budget Task Force and a Western Mass Roundtable to learn more about the budget issues South Hadley and surrounding towns are facing.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Constant motioned to approve the draft minutes of Feb. 3, 2026 as presented. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

7:05 P.M. PUBLIC HEARING: DELANEY’S MARKET – NEW BEER & WINE LICENSE

Cyr opened the public hearing at 7:05 p.m. and closed it at 7:07 p.m. Sweeney motioned to approve the application for a new Beer & Wine License for Delaney’s Market at 459 Granby Rd. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

TRI-ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS

The Selectboard interviewed Rachel Leach and appointed:

Adam Jaiko – Full Time Conservation Commission 2026

George Francis – Veterans Council 2026

Stephen Romero – Veterans Council 2026

Adam Jaiko – Veterans Council - 2028

Rachel Leach - Historical Commission 2028

Robert Szklarz – Historical Commission – 2026

Olivia Aguilar - Sustainability & Energy Commission – 2028

FARMER DISTILLERY POURING PERMIT FEE

Sweeney motioned to move to set the annual Farmer Distillery Pouring Permit fee at \$800. Constant seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

SEWER & TRASH FEES

DPW Superintendent John Broderick said the current annual curbside collection fee per household for every-other-week collection of trash and recycling (and spring & fall yard waste

collection) is \$250. With a healthy fund balance expected at the end of FY26, available for any unforeseen circumstances or repairs to enterprise fund vehicles or infrastructure and contractual increases to collections and disposals of 6%, he recommended the Selectboard set the curbside collection fee for FY27 at the current rate of \$250 per household.

Sweeney motioned to set the curbside collection fee for FY27 at the current rate of \$250 per household. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

Broderick explained that with the recently released Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, and the associated costs anticipated to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant, five pumping stations and infrastructure to ensure an operable compliant system for years to come, the annual sewer fee needs to increase over time to build the fund balance to be able to pay for the borrowing needed. The current fee is \$500/year per EDU. The engineering study recommends an anticipated increase of \$300 dollars or so over the next 10-20 years to properly fund these improvements. Broderick recommended increasing the FY27 annual sewer fee by \$25/EDU to \$525.

Constant motioned to increase the FY27 annual sewer fee by \$25/EDU to \$525. Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

SOUTH HADLEY GIFT AGREEMENT

Three-and-a-half years ago, the first four pickleball courts were constructed at Buttery Brook Park through private fundraising after the town indicated no public funds were available. President of the Friends of Buttery Brook Park, Kim Prough, explained the courts have since seen consistent and heavy use by seniors, students and families throughout the day and evening. For the additional courts and their repairs, the Friends of South Hadley Seniors and The Friends of Buttery Brook Park are donating \$20,000 and \$106,480 respectively. Prough said a \$50,000 national grant from USA Pickleball, along with numerous individual and business donations, were also received. The total cost for all eight courts is slightly over \$300,000, with the town's share being less than \$20,000.

Constant motioned to accept the gift agreements between the Friends of South Hadley Seniors Inc, The Friends of Buttery Brook Park the Town of South Hadley as presented and authorize the use of the board's electronic signatures.

DECEMBER QUARTERLY REPORT

Town Accountant William Sutton explained General Fund revenues are tracking similar to last year and are within or exceeding estimates, with a few exceptions. In Lieu of Taxes revenue is up approximately \$105,000 due to higher SHELD indirect cost reimbursement and PILOT payments, and room tax collections total \$31,900 through December. However, tax liens are down about \$177,000 due to fewer redemptions and the absence of prior-year foreclosure revenue; Motor Vehicle Excise is down \$55,000 (15%), likely due to timing; Penalties and Interest are down nearly \$40,000, primarily from lower tax lien interest; and Interest Income is down \$166,000 year-over-year, though it is still projected to exceed the annual estimate.

Landfill Enterprise Fund revenues are lower than last year but within projections, reflecting decreased Pay-As-You-Throw revenues, partially offset by a \$150,000 increase in trash fees due to higher rates; interest income is down about \$30,000. Wastewater Treatment Plant Enterprise Funds revenues are up approximately \$185,000 due to the sewer rate increase, with interest income slightly below last year but above estimate. Golf Course revenues (excluding food and beverage) are up \$41,000 (5%), driven by greens fees, cart rentals, and a \$13,500 increase in season passes; food and beverage revenue is down \$13,000, while the overall annual estimate is up \$31,000 (2%).

DCR Notice of Proposed Acquisition of Land, South Hadley, 301 CMR 51.00; #P-001110

Sweeney formally announced that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting through its Department of Conservation and Recreation ("DCR"), is considering acquiring approximately 40.7 acres of forestland in the Town of South Hadley ("Town"), located at Mount Holyoke and adjacent to the Joseph Allen Skinner State Park or other interests in such land. The property is currently primarily undeveloped wooded uplands. The proposed use for the property will be protected conservation and recreational purposes with public access. Attached to the Selectboard packet was a locus map marked "Exhibit A," which shows the property that DCR is interested in acquiring.

Miles seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION BALLOT

The board reviewed the Proposition 2 ½ Ballot Questions Requirements & Procedures August 2017 document from the Division of Local Services.

The board discussed whether to present a single override amount or multiple options (\$6M, \$9M, \$11M), weighing simplicity and clarity against providing voter choice. Members expressed concern about declining school choice enrollment, rising costs and the impact of reductions to services such as athletics, as well as the risks of relying on free cash to support ongoing operations.

A straw poll of the Selectboard indicated support for placing \$9 million and \$11 million options before voters, with less support for \$6 million. The board affirmed general support for pursuing an override and agreed to use feedback from the upcoming Special Town Meeting and further discussion to finalize ballot language at their March 3 meeting.

Casolari motioned to extend the meeting by 10 minutes. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

The board agreed they were in support of an override in general but would finalize their ballot question language at their March 3 meeting.

TRAFFIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

Romboletti gave an overview of the TRC's annual report, which can be read here:

<https://www.southhadley.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/1097?fileID=59812>

PILOT OVERVIEW

Wong explained there are 29 entities identified in South Hadley that are tax exempt, not including governmental entities, South Hadley Electric Light Department or Holyoke Gas and Electric. SHELD provides an annual PILOT payment of \$220k per year, recently increased from \$180k per year. HG&E provides a PILOT of \$55k per year that has not increased since 2004 and cannot be changed without legislation. There is some work trying to increase the payments received for state owned land. The town received \$50k for FY26. Per 2025 data, tax exempt property for the 29 entities total \$240 million in property value and would bring in \$3.35 million if these properties were taxable. If 100% of the properties voluntarily adhered to the policy similar to Holyoke, this would yield \$800k annually. Wong included a list of the properties:

<https://www.southhadley.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/1097?fileID=59813>

It was emphasized that PILOT programs are voluntary and full participation is unlikely. It was noted that Mount Holyoke College is operating with a multi-million-dollar annual deficit and facing rising costs like the town. Wong said a memo regarding a PILOT discussion has already been sent to MHC. Some members cautioned against viewing PILOTs as a “silver bullet” for budget challenges.

Members directed Wong to review area PILOT policies and draft a South Hadley version to run by town counsel. They favored sending a finalized version of the policy to tax-exempt entities that establishes transparency of what the town is asking of the entity instead of forming a committee specifically for PILOT programming.

Joel Prough, of 8 Silverwood Terr., and Pamela Stawasz, of 110 Richview Ave, discussed MHC’s endowment and investments.

DLS MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Wong explained a management review from the Division of Local Services could help figure out how to better manage the town at a lower cost, as well as explore creation of a Finance Director position and a restructuring of the administration / HR / finance departments. She noted South Hadley is understaffed compared to other comparable communities and her end goal is to reduce staff even more. Selectboard members discussed requesting a review to evaluate the town’s administrative and financial structure in light of upcoming retirements, staffing constraints and long-term sustainability.

Members amended Wong’s scope of the DLS management review to include exploring any possible efficiencies or improvements in services by increasing collaborations with the town and school in this area.

Constant moved to allow the town to submit a request for a review. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

OLD BUSINESS

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE

The board tabled this item to their next meeting where they will have more information.

FY26 BUDGET

Wong said there are no substantive updates to the budget at this time and that the full presentation to the Appropriations Committee will be posted to the town website within 24 to 48 hours. More detailed budget discussions with department heads are anticipated in May.

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

The Selectboard agreed they were not ready to make a specific recommendation to Town Meeting aside from agreeing they all support an override of some kind.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR PBE

As part of her PBE goals update Wong reported significant mid-year progress across regional advocacy, policy development, union negotiations, financial analysis, and organizational reform, noting that the town is taking a proactive and collaborative leadership role regionally. She acknowledged the pace of work is intense and not necessarily sustainable long-term, but emphasized that staff are working strategically and transparently to pursue innovative structural changes.

ADJOURN

Miles motioned to adjourn. Sweeney seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

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