

Received 9/8/26
4:02 PM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham
Board of Selectmen
Monday, August 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.
3rd floor, Town Hall, and Remote via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording

Passcode: AU^hTa4C

1. Call to Order

First Selectman Rea called the Board of Selectmen meeting of Monday, August 17, 2026, to order at 7:00 p.m.
Also present: Selectman Chadd and Selectman Hennick.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

First Selectman Rea led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN CHADD, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH AN AMENDMENT TO AGENDA ITEM #13C REVISE MEETING DATE FROM JULY 13, 2026, TO JULY 20, 2026. VOTE: ALL AYE

4. Public Comment (Open to agenda items only)

Lucy Meigs: spoke in support of item #8. She is hopeful that the town will consider the request and move forward with the project. She noted the importance of the land being owned by the town to allow for continuation of trails.

Roger Kleeman: spoke about June 22nd minutes and clarified his comments. First Selectman Rea responded the meeting was erroneously not recorded and the minutes were amended.

Rick Parmelee: commented that Zoom meetings are not produced on the website quick enough.

5. Accept Resignation: Leah Gastler, Economic Development Commission

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN HENNICK TO ACCEPT WITH GRATITUDE THE RESIGNATION OF LEAH GASTLER, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION. VOTE: ALL AYE

6. Expiration of Terms (per Charter Sec. 2.7):

- a. Ethics Commission, terms ending April 30, 2026 (1 regular, 1 alternate)
None.

7. Accept nominations and vote to fill the following vacancies (per Charter 2.6):

- a. Building Code of Appeals, 2028
None.
- b. Ethics Commission, Regular, 2028
None.
- c. Ethics Commission, Alternate, 2028
None.
- d. Sustainable Durham, Alternate, 2027
None.
- e. Sustainable Durham, Regular, 2028
None.
- f. Estuary Transit District Board of Directors, 2030

MOTION BY SELECTMAN CHADD, SECONDED BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, TO APPOINT TOM HENNICK TO THE ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TERM EXPIRING 2030. VOTE: 2 AYE (B. REA, R. CHADD) 1 ABSTAIN (T. HENNICK). MOTION PASSED

8. Discuss Trust for Public Land Request, New Haven Road – Honor Lawler, Sr. Project Manager

First Selectman Rea explained that the Conservation Commission voted unanimously to request that the town contribute funds towards the purchase of 57 acres west of New Haven Road and around 20 acres east of New Haven Road. The funds requested for the town would total \$150,000, which is 10% of purchase price. The State of CT and Trust of Public Lands would contribute towards the remaining balance, through grants and private donors.

Honor Lawlor, Senior Project Manager from the Trust for Public Land was present to discuss the project. She explained that the Trust for Public Land is a national, non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to connect people to the outdoors, build parks, and do land protection/acquisition. She protects land in CT and explained that the community/town will find parcels and request assistance from the Trust. This could be because a parcel price is too high or landowners difficult. Examples of past work include: farming parcels, historic sites, Trap Rock Ridge, and coastline thorough the state. Totalling about 8,500 acres throughout state; also nationally, 5,500 places leveraging \$110 billion in public funding. The Trust has a focus on national trails, and the New England Scenic Trail is important to their mission; running 200 miles through 41 communities and multiple states. Unlike the Appalachian Trail which had federal funding, this newer trail relies on towns and/or Land Trusts to run it.

Honor further explained that the section of trail on New Haven Road is vulnerable; as it comes through Wallingford where the Water Company owns the land and it is very well protected. It then comes through Durham, where the land is privately owned for a good stretch until it goes into Guilford. – Issues could arise if new landowner came along and did not want to host the trail, as the current owner does. If that happened, there are limited options for the trail, due to development along New Haven Road.

The current landowners who hosted the land for many years were willing to protect, time is right now for the owners. Parking is an issue and it is dangerous walking on New Haven Road. This would eliminate the road walk and could go right to a trail head straight across instead, much safer conditions for hikers. This would require coordination with the town on how to increase safety.

The Trust is under contract with the property owners for \$1.49 million. They have applied for a LEAP grant in the amount of \$400,000 and hope to hear back in October. There is another \$486,000 secured and a private grant for \$25,000. They are looking for the town to fund \$150,000. The overall budget for project is \$1.64 million including surveys, appraisals, and a lot of requirements in this case. The Trust currently holds the contract with the property owners, but if all goes through the Middlesex Land Trust will become the new property owners. The CT Forest and Park will steward the trail. The land is currently PA490, and Middlesex Land Trust is tax exempt.

Lucy Meigs, Conservation Commission member, noted that the trail gets a lot of usage on the weekends

Selectman Chadd: was concerned about using town funds towards this purchase, but the town not owning the property. He spoke about other land for sale in town that might be more beneficial to the taxpayers. Honor acknowledged this question gets asked in other communities too, and noted if the town owns the property, then they are on the hook for future improvements, upkeep and budget allocations. She noted the purchase could increase property values for surrounding properties, forest and recreational land are economic drivers, and ecological benefits such as water quality protection. The goal is to close this agreement by the end of 2026 but will depend on funding.

The Board thanked Honor for her time. They asked for an update on the potential grant awards before they move any further with this request for town funds.

9. Discuss request to adopt the local-option property tax exemption authorized under Connecticut General Statutes §12-81(83), as amended by Public Act 25-168 (2025)

John Philip, town Assessor, gave a brief synopsis on this topic. On 2024 Grand List, General Assembly passed law to extend Disabled Veterans exemption to include their whole house. 100% disabled Veterans get assessed value of house only; not land or other structures on property. Last year, municipalities may extend exemption to include their entire property and may put provisions to limit the exemption to the median assessment in town for the entire property.

As of today, only two or three towns have passed this for the present year, although a number of towns are considering it for the upcoming year. One town has limited it to no more than the exemption of the median assessment for a dwelling. J. Philip noted that Durhams' median property assessment is around \$320,000 based on Fair Market Value of \$450,000. The Town of Ledyard lost a little less than a million and is considered a town with a concentrated Veteran base. He felt it may not be a significant hit if Durham passed this now, but the risk is continued growth with Veterans coming into town. Durham has a local Veterans tax option in place.

The Board spoke about the timeline for a proposed amended ordinance and agreed this needed more investigation into what other towns are doing. The Board thanked J. Philip for his time.

10. Set special meeting: Charter Revision Commission Report

MOTION BY SELECTMAN HENNICK, SECONDED BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, TO SET A SPECIAL MEETING: CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION REPORT ON MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2026, AT 7:00 P.M. ON THE 3RD FLOOR OF TOWN HALL. VOTE: ALL AYE

11. Set date, time, location and approve Call to Special Town Meeting

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN HENNICK, TO SET A SPECIAL TOWN MEETING FOR ALL ELIGIBLE VOTES OF DURHAM ON MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2026, AT 6:00 PM ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE TOWN HALL TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING ITEMS;

1. To fill 1 vacancy for the term expiring 2028 on the Compensation Review/Personnel Policy Board
2. To elect one member to a five-year term on the Compensation Review/Personnel Policy Board expiring 2029
3. To Transfer \$226,676 from the following lines in fiscal year 2025-2026:

434005 Tree Warden	99,203
430305 Highway & Streets	20,364
431705 DMIAAB	47,941
9520068 CIP Facilities	59,168
	226,676
To the following lines in the fiscal year 2025-2026:	
430705 Snow and Ice Removal	(167,121)
510005 Social Security	(29,971)
980010 Tax Refunds	(29,584)
	(226,676)

as recommended by the Board of Finance on August 11, 2026

4. To approve the following carryovers from fiscal year 2025-2026 into the 2026-2027 fiscal year:

411105 OFS Prof Consulting	21,500
418705 Agriculture Commission	1,300
420305 Volunteer Fire Department	2,500
9415305 CIP Planning & Zoning	5,000
9418605 CIP Complete Streets	27,778
9420305 CIP Volunteer Fire Department	23,095
9420325 CIP Bldgs Volunteer Fire Dept	24,500
9422110 CIP Communications	57,424
9430305 Guire Road Culvert	146,305
9430305 Shady Lane	287,231
9430305 Major Culvert Repair	70,178
9430305 Pavement Preservation	122,765
9520068 CIP Facilities	87,689
	877,265

as recommended by the Board of Finance on August 11, 2026

VOTE: ALL AYE

12. Approval of Tax Refunds

MOTION BY SELECTMAN CHADD, SECONDED BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, TO APPROVE A TOTAL OF (24) TAX REFUNDS AS RECOMMENDED BY TAX COLLECTOR; TOTALING: \$10,291.87

Discussion: First Selectman Rea noted his son was receiving a refund and he would be abstaining.

VOTE: 2 AYE (R. CHADD, T. HENNICK) 1 ABSTAIN (B.REA)

MOTION PASSED.

13. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. June 22, 2026, amended

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN HENNICK, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 22, 2026 AS AMENDED. VOTE ALL AYE

- b. July 1, 2026

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN HENNICK, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 1, 2026 AS PRESENTED. VOTE ALL AYE

- c. July 20, 2026

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN HENNICK, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 20, 2026 AS PRESENTED. VOTE ALL AYE

14. Old/New Business

First Selectman Rea spoke about the following Old/New Business:

- Bid going out on August 18, 2026, for 51 Main Street building; Building Official will be project manager
- The Board received an email from Sustainable Durham email looking for their sign off on communications plan; improving municipal communications, inventory of current communications and future strategy, consolidation/improvement of communicating town services, government actions and public activities which the possibility of a town newsletter, noting that at times residents are unaware of programs, activities happening around town, BOS is in support of their efforts and will have further discussion with Sustainable Durham.

15. Selectmen Comments

Selectman Hennick: reminded the Board they are invited to a TUMMS dinner on September 3rd at the Community Center.

16. Public Comments

Rick Parmelee: spoke about the Animal Control vehicle and its uses. First Selectman Rea responded the ACO has access to the vehicle if needed, the Charter documentation is posted on the website, felt there was a system for Steward Road/Tri Mountain and will not confuse any first responders.

17. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jason Beaudoin, Recording Secretary