

MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE LITCHFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026 ~ 5:30 P.M.
REMOTE MEETING BY LIVE INTERNET VIDEO STREAM AND TELEPHONE

Call to Order First Selectman Denise Raap called the virtual meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Selectmen present were Jeff Zullo, Dan Morosani, Jodiann Tenney, John Bongiorno and First Selectman Denise Raap. Also present virtually were Finance Direct Amaechi Obi, Assistant to the Finance Director Stacey Dionne, and Matt Tobin.

Approval of Minutes:

- a) **Board of Selectmen, regular meeting, 02/17/2026 Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to approve the 02/17/2026 regular Board of Selectmen meeting minutes. J. Tenney seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed. D. Morosani abstained.

Public Requests/Comments M. Tobin noted that at the previous meeting there was discussion on how to present the Constable budget. He stated his preference is to present it as an addition to a base budget. He also reported that the invoices provided by Region 20 totaled approximately \$2.2 million.

Selectmen's Requests J. Bongiorno requested that a future agenda include discussion of whether residents or businesses with outstanding sewer or property taxes should not be permitted to obtain building permits or planning and zoning permits, noting as an example an addition to a home. He also asked for clarification on the State's process regarding liens and foreclosures for properties with years of unpaid taxes, emphasizing the importance of applicants being in good standing with the Town before seeking additional approvals. He further requested discussion on Forman School's outstanding taxes and how to proceed given their use of Town systems and services. J. Zullo stated that a conversation with Town Counsel is needed regarding back taxes and statutory limitations, and he agreed to add PILOT programs for nonprofits to a future agenda. D. Raap noted that the Building Official checks whether applicants are current on their taxes before issuing permits; however, he does not have access to WPCA tax information and does not issue building permits unless Town taxes are paid.

First Selectman's Update Report D. Raap reported that the WPCA has hired a new employee, Jose Cotto, who will begin in an entry-level position. She noted that another WPCA position remains open and stated that salary competition, particularly the significantly higher pay being offered by Woodridge Lake, was a major factor in the departure of the previous employee. She added that the Town has extended an offer for the Land Use position, and the candidate will now proceed through the pre-employment process. D. Raap also reported that she and Greg LaCava, Warren's First Selectman, will be traveling to Hartford to submit in-person testimony on HB 5323, which seeks State assistance to fund a forensic audit for both Region 6 and Litchfield Public Schools. She reminded everyone that the CTDOT public hearing is scheduled for March 31, 2026, at 7 p.m. at Litchfield Intermediate School. She stated she is awaiting confirmation from TLBA on a date for the public hearing regarding the Bantam Annex. She concluded by noting that the next regular BOS meeting will be held on March 24 rather than March 17.

Resignations

- a) Kenneth Merz from the WPCA, effective 02/19/2026, received and noted.

Interviews, Appointments & Reappointments

- a) **Appoint Todd Coelho as an Animal Control Officer Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to appoint Todd Coelho as an Animal Control Officer with a term ending 02/02/2027. J. Bongiorno seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.

Liaison Reports/Commission-Committee Minutes: On TownofLitchfieldct.gov website

Region 20 Update M. Tobin reported that after removing duplicate invoices, the Region 20 deficit invoices totaled approximately \$2.2 million rather than the originally stated \$2.6 million. He noted he has a spreadsheet of the calculations and will continue adding vendor information. J. Zullo asked whether, when D. Raap provides testimony on HB 5323, Region 20's FY25 financials should be included given the discrepancy in the deficit figures. D. Raap noted that the \$255,000 in Region 20 payments made on behalf of Region 6 may be contributing to the deficit. J. Bongiorno expressed concern that prior Region 20 budget votes were based on incomplete or inaccurate information, including the omission of contractual expenses such as transportation. D. Morosani voiced support for a State-funded forensic audit, stating it would provide a comprehensive review of Region 20, Region 6, and Litchfield Public Schools and offer a clearer understanding of the sources and uses of funds. He questioned at what stage the Attorney General might become involved. J. Tenney read Section 5 of HB 5323, stating her understanding that the State would conduct the audit. M. Tobin reiterated the need to resolve how much Region 6 owes Litchfield, noting the prior auditor reported \$178,000 while Region 20 cites \$118,000. A. Obi stated the former auditor indicated he could not reconcile the figure due to outstanding invoices and that the new auditor should be able to resolve it; the \$178,000 reflects the invoices provided to him. D. Raap added that a forensic audit would likely capture smaller invoices not reviewed previously. J. Zullo noted that a forensic audit typically examines potential fraud or financial mismanagement. Members agreed that the State should have provided stronger oversight during regionalization and expressed hope that lessons learned will help prevent similar issues for other municipalities.

Advanced Tech Update J. Bongiorno reiterated that the Town is now using the new phone system and that meetings have been moved to the fourth Monday of each month. He also noted that an inventory program is in place.

WPCA Liaison Update none

Sustainable Litchfield Update none

Vacancies: The list of current appointed vacancies with term expirations is as follows:

- Advanced Technology Commission: 2 alternate members 2/2026
- Beautification Commission: 2 regular members 1-02/2026, 1-02/2027; 3 alternate members 2/2028
- Cable TV Advisory Council: 1 member 6/2025
- Conservation Commission: 1 regular member 12/2028, 1 alternate member 12/2025
- Economic Development Commission: 1 alternate member 6/2027
- Inland Wetlands Commission: 2 alternate members 6/2027
- Litchfield Arts Council: 2 regular members 8/2027
- Litchfield Prevention Council: 3 alternate members 1-6/2026, 1-6/2027, 1-6/2028
- Milton Historic District Commission: 1 regulars 1/2030; 3 alternate members 2-1/2027, 1-1/2028
- Pension Commission: 2 alternate member 1-3/2028, 1-3/2030
- Sandy Beach Commission: 1 regular member 12/2028
- Sustainable Litchfield Committee: 2 alternate members 3/2028
- Veterans' Advisory Committee: 1 regular member 8/2026; 1 alternate member 8/2027
- Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA): 1 regular member 1/2029, 1 alternate member 1/2026
- Western CT Coalition, CAC #22: 1 member 5/2027
- Zoning Board of Appeals: 3 alternate members 3/2027

Tax Refunds

- a) **Four Refunds Totaling \$299.71 Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to approve the four tax refunds totaling \$299.71. J. Tenney seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.

Transfers none

Old Business

- a) **Selectmen Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Discussion** J. Zullo reviewed the budget process, noting that the Board of Finance holds a public hearing where residents may ask questions and make recommendations, and the Board of Finance may act on those recommendations. The budget then proceeds to a Town Meeting, where motions may only be made to reduce the budget. If approved, the Board of Finance subsequently sets the mill rate. It was agreed that while the public could request inclusion of the Constable budget at the hearing, the BOS will present the budget to the BOF without that expense.

J. Zullo also reported that Town Treasurer Erich Marriott has been consulting with Bond Counsel regarding the Litchfield Volunteer Ambulance building mortgage. Borrowing appears more favorable, as the current mortgage rate is 6.1% while bonding would fall in the 3.3–3.5% range and be tax-exempt.

D. Raap noted that POCAD, Litchfield Public Schools invoices, and litigation costs were removed from the operating budget because they are extraordinary expenses. She added that the Finance Office recommended that unspent Pay-Per-Call funds not revert to the general fund, and it was agreed to maintain Pay-Per-Call funding at \$160,000.

S. Dionne provided background on staffing changes, explaining that the Fire Marshal's Office now has a full-time administrative position previously shared with the Town Clerk and Finance. Finance is requesting a full-time position to cover the remaining workload and assist with grants.

In response to J. Tenney's question, S. Dionne clarified that the 401(a) budget now accounts for overtime and double-time, which were previously omitted and caused overages. She noted the 401(a) applies to employees hired after 2012 who are not in the pension plan.

Regarding the Bantam Annex, J. Bongiorno stressed that the \$106,000 figure reflects only the cost to keep the building open and does not include repairs. D. Raap clarified that \$67,000 in revenue from the Bantam Post Office offsets the total cost, bringing the estimated building expense to roughly \$180,000. J. Zullo noted that a plan will be presented to voters; D. Raap added that the Post Office is a standalone component and that voters must decide whether to invest in or abandon the building, as continuing to fund an inefficient structure is not financially prudent.

It was agreed to cancel Thursday's special meeting and reschedule it for March 10, 2026, at 6 p.m.

New Business

- a) **STEAP Resolution Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to approve the STEAP Resolution as recommended. J. Bongiorno seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.
- b) **DEEP Resolution Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to table the DEEP Resolution. J. Bongiorno seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.

Correspondence

- a) **23rd Annual Tour of the Litchfield Hills Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to approve the 23rd Annual Tour of the Litchfield Hills. J. Tenney seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.
- b) **Litchfield's Patriots Re: July 4th & September 12th North Street Extension Closure Motion:** J. Zullo motioned to approve use by the Litchfield's Patriots for July 4th and September

12th North Street Extension Closure. J. Bongiorno seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.

Executive Session Motion: J. Tenney motioned to go into executive session for Town litigation at 8:13 p.m. J. Zullo seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed. All members came out of executive session at 8:17 p.m. no motions no votes.

Adjournment Motion: J. Bongiorno motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8: 18 p.m. J. Zullo seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Denise Raap". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Denise Raap, First Selectman