

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, June 10, 2025
Select Board Chambers and
Via ZOOM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89068374046>**

6:01 p.m. Call to Order

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Heidi Frail. Those present were Marianne Cooley, Joshua Levy, Kevin Keane, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance was also in attendance. Vice Chair Cathy Dowd joined via Zoom.

6:03 p.m. Public Comment Period

Gary Ajamian, 47 Meetinghouse Circle, expressed his support for Barbara McDonald or Ross Donald for appointment to the Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. He commented that both are new volunteers from outside the usual pool of appointees, which he expressed is needed more in Needham. He noted that Ms. McDonald earned nearly 3,000 votes on April 8, 2025, just a few hundred shy of winning. He believes they bring real-world experience, civic involvement, and they are not already serving on other committees.

Ross Donald, 25H Chambers Street, commented that the Town needs to be working to resolve issues related to potholes. He noted that he thinks 164 Linden Street is currently operating under a zoning use violation. Finally, he commented on the status and condition of the Needham Housing Authority Residents' Association and the need for funds, a bank account, and an office.

6:07 p.m. Joint Meeting: Select Board and School Committee – Executive Session

School Committee Chair Michael O'Brien opened a meeting of the Needham School Committee. Those present were Andrea Longo-Carter, Liz Lee, Michael Greis, and Sri Baqri. Superintendent Dan Gutekanst, Assistant Superintendent for Financial Operations Anne Gulati, and Interim Chief Technology Officer Mark Messias were also in attendance.

Motion by Mr. Greis that the School Committee vote to enter into Executive Session pursuant to Exception 4: To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, and strategies with respect thereto; with said executive session to include the School Committee and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Finance Committee, and with the Board to return to open session at the conclusion of the executive session.

Second: Ms. Longo Carter.

Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board vote to enter into Executive Session pursuant to Exception 4: To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, and strategies with respect thereto; with said executive session to include the School Committee and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Finance Committee, and with the Board to return to open session at the conclusion of the executive session.

Second: Ms. Cooley.

Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

The Committees entered into Executive Session.

6:52 p.m. The Committees returned from Executive Session.

Joint Meeting: Select Board and School Committee

Presenters: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent of Schools, Anne Gulati, Assistant Superintendent for Financial Operations, Mark Messias, Interim Chief Technology Officer

Mark Messias, Interim Chief Technology Officer, thanked team members for their support and collaboration in this departmental restructuring. Mr. Messias outlined the progress the Town has made in its School/Town information technology consolidation project over the first year. He outlined the team, department service areas, and highlights thus far, including the following priorities:

- End User Support: Provide the Town and School Departments with a consistent level of quality end user support
- IT Infrastructure: Maintain updated consistent standard of modern network and end user hardware
- Efficiencies: Look for efficiencies across all Town departments to increase collaboration and spend budget effectively

Mr. Messias emphasized that the focus of this collaboration is on integration and efficiencies through consensus building, collaboration, planning/budgeting, and implementation. He highlighted the achievements and current tasks of the Service Desk/Device Management Team, Enterprise Applications Team, Network and Systems Team, and Cybersecurity Team.

Anne Gulati, Assistant Superintendent for Financial Operations, then presented the strategic plan and mission of the IT User Advisory Group: to empower the Town of Needham and its stakeholders with reliable, secure, and innovative technology services and solutions that enhance operational efficiency, support educational excellence, and foster a connected community. This mission reflects the need for effective technology to support both general government and school functions. Both the mission and the vision emphasize the need to be a trusted and strategic partner that drives Needham's success through seamless, accessible, and future-ready technology, which enables informed decision-making, exceptional public service, and a dynamic learning environment. The core values of the IT User

Advisory Group are end user focus, collaboration, excellence, security and reliability, and innovation.

Ms. Gulati also outlined the goals of the team, focusing on establishing an effective and strategically aligned technology department and governance process. This involves training, communication, and improvement of support services in order to elevate the end-user experience, accessibility, integration, and security. Ms. Gulati outlined the following recommendations:

- Every three years, the Select Board and School Committee approve an IT strategic plan. The plan would reflect goals and priorities, as identified by Town and School Departments and the IT User Advisory Committee.
- The Select Board and School Committee receive annual updates on actions planned and taken to meet those goals.

Discussion ensued regarding enterprise risk, consistencies between technology needs and operations across Town and School facilities, and data integration. The Select Board will be asked to vote on the Needham Information Technology Strategic Plan FY2026-2028 at a future meeting. Ms. Fitzpatrick thanked the School Committee and the team present for their dedication and commitment to this mission for the Town and Schools.

Motion by Michael Greis that the School Committee vote to adjourn the Joint Meeting with the Select Board.

Second: Alisa Skatrud. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call.

7:31 p.m. Appointment Calendar and Consent Agenda
Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Board vote to approve the Appointment Calendar and Consent Agenda with the exception of Item 8.

Mr. Levy asked to remove Item 8 from the Consent Agenda given that there is an additional request that the individual would like to make at the same time. David Davison explained that the individual who filed for an abatement also requested further discussions regarding an unintentional use of water.

Second: Mr. Keane.

Ms. Cooley noted that she hopes the work of the NUARI Working Group continues despite following its dissolution. Mr. Levy noted the presence of Sheila Selby in the audience who is being appointed to Needham Council for Arts and Culture.

Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

APPOINTMENT CALENDAR

1.	Shawn Larsen	Needham Council for Arts and Culture Term Exp: 6/10/2028
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2.	Sheila Selby	Needham Council for Arts and Culture Term Exp: 6/30/2028 (effective 7/1/2025)
3.	Victor Seidel	Historical Commission Term Exp: 6/30/2028 (effective 7/1/2025)
4.	David Downing	Council of Economic Advisors Term Exp: 6/30/2028 (effective 7/1/2025)
5.	Andrew Lyczmanenko	Council of Economic Advisors Term Exp: 6/30/2028
6.	Dina Creiger	Council of Economic Advisors Term Exp: 6/30/2028 (effective 7/1/2025)
7.	Eric Greenberg	Climate Action Committee Term Exp: 6/30/2026
*Reappointments and Updated Ex-Officio Appointments Included in Agenda Packet		

CONSENT AGENDA

1.	Approve Open Session Minutes of May 5, 2025, Open Session Minutes of May 13, 2025, and Executive Session Minutes of May 13, 2025
2.	Accept the following donation made to the Needham Affordable Housing Trust: \$100 from Janis M. Soma and Bruce T. Eisenhower in honor of the 80th birthday of Jeanne McKnight
3.	Accept the following donations made to the Needham Aging Services Division: \$25 from Lynne Claflin \$20 from Fitzroy Danglad
4.	Accept the following donation made to the Needham Community Revitalization Trust Fund: \$5000 from Paul Good
5.	Dissolve the following committees: - Housing Needham Advisory Group - Needham United Against Racism Initiative Working Group - Town Manager Screening Committee
6.	Approve 20B Exemption for the following individuals to engage in work with the Needham Park and Recreation Department: Logan Demaria and Elizabeth Vallatini
7.	Approve and authorize the chair to sign amendment #1 of the Employment Agreement between the Town Manager and the Fire Chief.
8.	Approve and Sign Water Sewer Abatement 1341

NOTICE OF APPROVED BLOCK PARTIES

Name	Address	Party Location	Date	Time	Rain Date
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Janine Helwig	158 Meadowbrook Rd	Newell Ave. & Prospect St.	9/6/25	3pm- 9pm	9/7/25
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7:35 p.m. 2025 Juneteenth Proclamation

Ms. Dowd read the 2025 Juneteenth Proclamation.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Board vote to approve and sign the 2025 Juneteenth Proclamation.

Second: Mr. Levy. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

7:39 p.m. Public Hearing: Eversource Grant of Location – 77 Oxbow Road
Presenters: Joanne Callender, Eversource Energy, David Tocci, Tocci Management

Eversource Energy requested permission to install approximately 9 feet of conduit in Oxbow Road. The reason for this work is to provide service to a pool house at 77 Oxbow Road. The Department of Public Works has approved this petition, based on Eversource Energy’s commitment to adhere to the Town’s regulation that all conduit installed must be 3” schedule 40 minimum; and, that when buried, that conduit must be placed at 24” below grade to the top of the conduit.

Work has already been completed in the right of way. Board members discussed Mr. Tocci’s noncompliance with the Town’s policy, reiterating the need for permission for this type of work to be completed.

Gary Ajamian, 47 Meetinghouse Circle, commented that as a retired master electrician, he has seen situations like this before that require a judgment to be made in urgent situations.

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Board vote to approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 9 feet of conduit in Oxbow Road.

Second: Ms. Cooley.

Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

7:55 p.m. Introduce Julie Castor-Deas, Director of Assessing
Presenter: Cecilia Simchak, Assistant Director of Finance

Ms. Simchak introduced Julie Castor-Deas, newly appointed Director of Assessing who began work with the Town on April 28, 2025. She has previously worked in Boston and Brockton, and recently was the Director of Assessing in Stoughton. She was also previously the 3rd Vice President of the Plymouth County Assessors Association. Board members welcomed Ms. Castor-Deas to her new role. Ms. Castor-Deas expressed her excitement to be in this role and her commitment to ensuring the public understands the process and is educated about assessments in Town.

8:04 p.m. Joint Meeting: Select Board and Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
Presenters: Cathy Dowd, Select Board Vice Chair, Jim Flanagan, Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Reginald Foster, Chair of the Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, called to order the Joint Meeting of the Needham Housing Authority and the Select Board. He noted that Jim Flanagan was present in-person and Janice Bennett was present via Zoom.

Cathy Dowd and Jim Flanagan, Vice Chair of the Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners interviewed seven applicants for a current vacancy on the Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. Ms. Dowd and Mr. Flanagan recommended that Amanda Berman and Felix Zemel be considered to serve until the next Town Election in 10 months. Ms. Dowd emphasized that the next 10 months are critical for competing for state and federal funding for Linden Chambers and Seabeds. She stated that she and Mr. Flanagan focused on objective factors when determining their recommendations for the vacancy on the Needham Housing Authority, specifically knowledge and professional experience in affordable housing. Mr. Flanagan outlined the two proposed appointees and their relevant professional experience in housing, finance, and public policy services in various municipalities. Board members commented on the strengths of each applicant and the focus of the interviews. Mr. Levy raised concerns and questions related to the interview process and prior Board practice. Ms. Frail noted that Town Counsel had advised that the process was appropriate and aligned with past Board practice.

**Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board and Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners vote to appoint Amanda Berman to the Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners until the next Town Election.
Second: Ms. Bennett.**

Discussion continued regarding Ms. Berman's specific skills that are advantageous in this role. Board members also weighed the advantages and drawbacks of appointing individuals who are already serving on Town committees compared with new individuals. Mr. Flanagan expressed his support for Ms. Berman given the most urgent work ahead of the NHA Board of Commissioners at the moment.

Approved 7-1 by roll call vote of both Boards:

**Ms. Dowd – Yes
Ms. Cooley – Yes
Mr. Levy – No
Mr. Keane – Yes
Ms. Frail – Yes
Mr. Foster – Yes
Mr. Flanagan – Yes**

Ms. Bennett – Yes

Motion by Mr. Flanagan to adjourn the meeting of the Needham Housing Authority.

Second: Ms. Bennett. Unanimously approved 3-0 by roll call vote.

8:30 p.m.

Public Hearing: Water and Sewer Rates

Presenters: Water and Sewer Rate Structure Committee, David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance, Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works, Cecilia Simchak, Assistant Director of Finance, Michael Retzky, Superintendent of Water and Sewer

The Water and Sewer Rate Structure Committee met on several occasions to prepare for its recommendations to the Board for the FY2026 water and sewer rates. The Committee forwarded to the Board three rate scenarios. It is anticipated that the Select Board will vote on the water and sewer rates at its meeting on June 24, 2025. The rates would take effect for usage from July 1 forward.

Mr. Davison presented three rate scenarios for this fiscal year, with the intent to offer the Board different avenues of raising the required amount of funds to support the water and sewer operations. With Coca-Cola discontinuing their bottling services in Needham, revenue towards water and sewer has decreased and needs to be compensated through other means. Harold Berger, Chair of the Water and Sewer Rate Structure Committee, noted that more than 80 scenarios were analyzed, with the Committee distilling these down to three potential scenarios.

Board members asked questions about the relationship between revenue targets and budgeted amounts, the effect of water bans on revenue and water consumption, and revenue stability in the future. Mr. Davison and Mr. Berger emphasized in their responses and explanations that the rate scenarios do not only consider the upcoming fiscal year but how this establishes a stable foundation for the more long-term future.

9:00 p.m.

Update on Highland Avenue Roadway Improvements Project

Presenters: Tyler Gabrielski, Director of Streets and Transportation, Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works, Jared Duval, P.E., Project Manager, TEC, Inc., Rebecca Clark, P.E., Design Lead/Assistant Project Manager, TEC Inc.

The Department of Public Works and TEC Inc. provided a progress update on the Town's design process for submission to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) through the regional Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Highland Ave South (Webster Street to Great Plain Avenue). This requires the Town to go through a prescribed process with the MPO and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to get access to the resources and funding from the program. This program will address three signalized intersections in need of upgrades, resolve drainage issues, and improve multimodal transit

through the corridor. This is an extension of a pre-existing program that goes from Highland Ave at Webster Street all the way to Newton Center.

Ms. Lustig outlined the benefits and drawbacks of funding this project through the TIP. Mr. Duval outlined the project team, project limits, history and timeline, goals, MassDOT TIP process, scope and design considerations, public feedback, potential design revisions, and next steps.

Jared Duval, Project Manager, then provided an update on TEC's work on the project thus far, focusing on the project limits and project timeline. The project timeline included field data collection, traffic data collection, and topographic surveys. Mr. Duval and Mr. Gabrielski outlined the various processes for TIP projects and the goals of the Highland Avenue project. This includes operational and safety improvements at intersections, traffic calming features to enhance safety for pedestrians, and stormwater drainage system improvements. Further information can be found in the PowerPoint presented during the meeting.

Throughout the presentation, Board members asked about the process for public feedback, how to address the top priorities, the potential for turning lanes at intersections, and the specifics of potential designs that were presented. Public feedback so far has focused on safety, parking, trees, congestion, cost, and design. Mr. Duval noted that there is a need for more targeted supplemental parking studies in this area. The Board discussed the advantages and disadvantages of moving forward with this project.

10:10 p.m. Town Manager

Update to List of Special Municipal Employees

The State Guidance on special municipal employees states that the Town should file with the Ethics Commission a list of all local special municipal employees. Since 2021, the Select Board has included in the committee charge and composition the Special Municipal Employee status of positions under its jurisdiction. Ms. Fitzpatrick recommended that the Board vote to remove positions on committees that have been dissolved. Ms. Frail asked about the continuation of the Subcommittee to Study the Minuteman School and the Single Parcel Historic District Study Committee. Ms. Fitzpatrick noted that these committees are still functioning.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Board vote:

- 1. To rescind special municipal employee designation for the following municipal employees, and for all those holding positions on the following Town entities:**
 - a. Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group**
 - b. Needham United Against Racism Initiative (NUARI) Working Group**
 - c. Representative to the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee**

- d. Town Manager Screening Committee**
- 2. To place a list of special municipal employees, updated in accordance with its prior votes taken during this meeting, on file with the Town Clerk and to deliver a copy to the State Ethics Commission.**

Second: Mr. Levy. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Town Manager Report

- Drought Management Task Force voted to rescind the emergency non-essential outdoor water use restriction that was in place since April 9.
- Congressman Auchincloss' office notified the Town that the Needham Stormwater Management for Healthy Rivers project that was previously cancelled has been reinstated.

10:14 p.m. Board Discussion

Envision Needham Center Working Group

The Select Board established the Needham Center Project Working Group on August 14, 2024 to provide input and feedback to the Department of Public Works and its consulting engineers on the design and layout of the Needham Center/Great Plain Avenue project. The current composition includes three designated representatives from Needham Center businesses. There is a proposal to expand the number of said representatives from three to four.

Board members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of accepting or giving up grant money as outlined in the suggested motion. The Board agreed that further study is required to understand various possible plans, including the current four-lane configuration, a three-lane plan, and a two-lane plan, as well as the effects of each of these scenarios on traffic congestion, parking, bike safety, pedestrian safety, economic vitality, and cost. They also agreed that public feedback on each of these plans is essential in order to be able to move forward.

Mr. Keane expressed that the decision to give up the grant should be delayed until further analysis is completed. Ms. Cooley asked about when work will begin on stormwater improvements in Needham Center and how this can be aligned with potential pilot improvements. Ms. Dowd emphasized that if the Board decides not to give up the grant, the focus inevitably remains on the two-lane plan, to which the public expressed concern and resistance. The Board agreed that it is necessary to collect public feedback on the relevant impact of each of the three potential plans on traffic, parking, safety, economic vitality, and cost.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Board vote to adopt Items 2, 3, and 4 as specified in the Agenda Packet.

Second: Mr. Keane.

Ms. Dowd expressed her support for Item 1 but recognized the importance of consensus and emphasized her commitment to keeping an open mind despite the possibility of receiving grant funding.

Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

The Board continued their discussion regarding the working group composition. After discussing the benefits and challenges of expanding the committee by one individual or reducing it significantly, the following motion was made.

Motion by Mr. Levy that the Board vote to adopt the revised Envision Needham Center Working Group Charge and Composition as presented in the Agenda Packet.

Second: Ms. Dowd. Approved 3-2.

Ms. Dowd – Yes

Ms. Cooley – No

Mr. Levy – Yes

Mr. Keane – No

Ms. Frail - Yes

Committee Reports

Ms. Frail reported that the Tree Preservation Planning Committee public listening session took place in a new format and the Needham High School graduation took place. She also reported that she attended the VFW Installation Banquet. Race Amity Day also took place organized by the Needham Diversity Initiative. Finally, the public forum for the Large House Review Study Committee took place with positive turnout both in-person and online.

Mr. Levy reported that there were two Stormwater By-Law Working Group meetings.

Mr. Keane reported that North Hill hosted a presentation on environmental issues for the community at which Gabby Queenan represented the Town.

11:03 p.m.

Adjourn

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Board vote to adjourn the Select Board Meeting of Tuesday, June 10, 2025.

Second: Mr. Levy. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting is available at:

<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID>

The next Select Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

A video recording of the June 10, 2025 Select Board meeting can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aROsDs5SW64> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQcpFqRXiBU> or at <https://www.needhamchannel.org/2025/06/needham-select-board-6-10-25/>.