Town of Dunstable
Select Board Meeting Minutes
September 08, 2026

In attendance: Select Board Chair Ron Mikol, Select Board Vice Chair Leah Basbanes, Select Board Member David Tully, III, and Town Administrator Jason Silva.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM. Chair Mikol reviewed the agenda, which included public comments, approval of minutes, annual appointments, a conservation restriction, Safe Harbor status, meeting room technology upgrades, the FY2028 budget outlook, the Town Administrator's report, and topics not reasonably anticipated.

Public Comment
No public comments were offered.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 11, 2026*
The Board reviewed the minutes of the August 11, 2026 Select Board meeting. With no amendments proposed, on a **motion** by Leah Basbanes and **seconded** by David Tully, III, it was **voted to approve** the meeting minutes from August 11, 2026. **The vote was unanimous.**

Annual Appointments*
The Board considered the appointment of a Field Driver position.

During discussion, Board members briefly reviewed previous occupants of the position and confirmed the recommended appointment.

On a **motion** by Leah Basbanes and **seconded** by David Tully, III, it was **voted to approve** the meeting minutes from August 11, 2026. **The vote was unanimous.**

Conservation Restriction, 389 Thorndike Street and 60 Main Street, McLoon Property*
The Board considered approval of a revised conservation restriction affecting the McLoon Property.

TA Silva explained that the Board had previously approved the restriction; however, following legal review and state review, minor non-substantive wording changes had been made. Staff emphasized that:

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- The conservation protections remain unchanged.
- Permitted and prohibited uses remain unchanged.
- No substantive alterations were made to the intent or effect of the restriction.

It was noted that the revisions likely originated during the state's review process and were subsequently reviewed by the Dunstable Rural Land Trust's attorney without objection.

On a **motion** by Leah Basbanes and **seconded** by David Tully, III, it was **voted** to approve the Conservation Restriction from the Dunstable Rural Land Trust to the Dunstable Conservation Commission for the property located at 389 Thorndike Street and 60 Main Street, known as the McLoon Property, recorded at the Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds, Book 33494, Page 91, in perpetuity and exclusively for conservation purposes. **The vote was unanimous.**

Safe Harbor Status/Housing Production Plan Certification*

Town Administrator Silva revisited the topic of obtaining Safe Harbor certification under the Town's Housing Production Plan (HPP).

Mr. Silva reported that after a previous Board discussion, he contacted the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for clarification regarding Dunstable's eligibility. The primary question relates to when affordable housing units become eligible for inclusion toward Safe Harbor certification requirements.
Discussion included:

• Whether eligibility begins upon issuance of a comprehensive permit or upon issuance of building permits.
• The timing of affordable units being recognized on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).
• The impact of the proposed MCO affordable housing project, which is expected to contribute 48 affordable units.

Mr. Silva explained that based on EOHLC guidance:

• Six affordable units would satisfy the 0.5% threshold and potentially qualify the Town for a one-year certification.
• Eleven affordable units would satisfy the 1% threshold and potentially qualify the Town for a two-year certification.
• The MCO project would exceed either threshold if deemed eligible.

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Members of the Affordable Housing Committee had reviewed the issue and recommended submitting an application regardless of uncertainty, noting there would be no adverse consequence if the request were denied.
Board members agreed that seeking clarification through the application process was worthwhile, as a denial would provide definitive guidance on the Town's status.

A discussion occurred regarding the meaning of "Safe Harbor." Mr. Silva clarified that it relates to affordable housing regulations and may provide protections from certain Chapter 40B comprehensive permit applications when thresholds are met.

On a **motion** by Leah Basbanes and **seconded** by David Tully, III, it was **voted to approve** sending a letter requesting certification of the Dunstable Housing Production Plan and any related documents to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. **The vote was unanimous.**

Flat Screens in Town Hall Meeting Rooms*
The Board returned to a previously discussed proposal to install flat-screen displays in Town Hall meeting rooms.

The Town Administrator reported that:

- Sue Fayne had researched available options.
- Feedback had been gathered from neighboring communities and Town staff.
- One option involved "smart art" televisions capable of displaying artwork or photographs when not in use.
- Preliminary pricing indicated the project could likely be completed using available grant funding.

Board members discussed the possibility of displaying local artwork, photographs, or community images when the screens were not being used for presentations or meetings.

Additional discussion covered:

- The functionality of smart art displays.
- Whether the displays would appear as black screens when not in operation.
- Potential future use for viewing significant news or emergency events.
- Installation in the two primary Town Hall meeting rooms.

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While Board members expressed interest in the smart art functionality, they did not wish to limit the purchase only to that specific product if comparable alternatives proved more practical.

Original Motion: To approve installation of Smart Art flat screens in Town Hall meeting rooms.

Following discussion, the motion was amended.

Amended Motion: On an amended **motion** by Leah Basbanes and **seconded** by David Tully, III, it was **voted to approve** the installation of flat-screen displays in the meeting rooms of Town Hall. **The vote was unanimous.**

FY28 Budget Update

Mr. Silva provided an early update regarding preparation of the Fiscal Year 2028 budget.

Key points included:

- Preliminary projections continue to indicate that an override may be necessary to maintain existing service levels.
- Budget forecasts remain in the early stages and require significant refinement.
- Multiple ideas and recommendations are being explored through budget working groups.
- Current projections have not materially changed since previous presentations.

Mr. Silva reported upcoming discussions regarding:

- Property and casualty insurance costs.
- Health insurance projections.
- Other major budget assumptions affecting future forecasts.

Regarding school assessments, it was reported that:

- Preliminary school budget projections for level services remain approximately an 8% increase.
- While lower than increases experienced in some prior years, the projected increase remains well above the revenue growth available under Proposition 2½.

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Board members discussed the likelihood that an override request may ultimately be required should current trends continue. It was emphasized that discussions remain preliminary and no specific override amount has been determined.

Town Administrator Report

Mr. Silva provided updates on numerous ongoing initiatives and projects.

Union Building Project

- Proposals for the Union Building project were due that day.
- Six or seven proposals were received.
- The submissions had not yet been opened because a second observer was required for the opening process.
- An evaluation committee will be assembled.

Green Communities Grant

- The Town completed prior Green Communities projects in time to qualify for the next grant round.
- The grant application deadline is October 9.
- Staff intends to seek funding for the next phase of the Library HVAC project.
- Some local funding may be required as a match.

Municipal Citizens Academy

- The third year of the Municipal Citizens Academy recently began.
- Twelve residents have enrolled.

PFAS Mitigation Project

- Construction activities on Broad Street were expected to begin the following day.

Master Plan

- The completed Master Plan has been posted online.

Wood Boiler Project

- Contracting is complete.
- Required materials have been ordered.
- Work will be scheduled upon material delivery.

Swallow Union Building Shade Structure

- Construction of a new shade structure is underway.

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- The project is slightly behind schedule but expected to be completed soon.

Town Center and Trail Planning

- Staff plans to organize a meeting with residents in the Hillcrest Street neighborhood regarding trail loop connections and related planning efforts.
- A second meeting of the Town Center Working Group is also being planned.

FY2027 Goals and Objectives

- Draft goals and objectives have been provided to the Select Board.
- Staff will coordinate future discussions with the Board and Chair.

Capital Planning Committee

- The committee is scheduled to meet the following week.
- Department heads are expected to attend and provide preliminary capital planning forecasts.
- Discussion will also include anticipated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding receipts and related planning considerations.

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair
A Board member raised the current vacancy on the Advisory Board/Finance Committee and asked whether any applications had been received. Mr. Silva reported that no recent interest had been received.
The Board agreed to publicize the vacancy again, noting that budget season provides an excellent opportunity for interested residents to become involved in municipal finance and budget discussions.

On a motion by Vice Chair Basbanes and seconded by Mr. Tully, it was voted to adjourn at 6:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Fayne
Executive Assistant

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