

2026-05-08 Board of Selectmen Minutes

Town of Canterbury, NH
Board of Selectmen
Date: 2026 May 8
Location: Sam Lake House

Selectmen: Scott Doherty (Chair), Beth Blair, Calvin Todd
Others Present: Kal McKay (Admin Assistant)

1. Call to Order
 - a. The meeting was called to order at 8:31 a.m.
2. Town Administrator Salary
 - a. Beth distributed a copy of the Concord Monitor article about Town Administrator salaries and the minutes from the 2021 Town Meeting.
 - b. The article reported that Canterbury has the lowest paid Town Administrator amongst the 20 municipalities surveyed (19 of which are located in Merrimack County).
 - c. During the 2021 Town Meeting there was a lengthy discussion about wages in general and the Town Administrator salary in particular. Beth felt those minutes would be a helpful reference for this discussion.
 - d. Scott explained that he wanted to begin this discussion now, well before budget season, so that there would be time to do research. From Scott's extensive experience with town administrators in NH, he feels Ken is very good at his job.
 - e. The article didn't distinguish between full-time and part-time administrators. The Selectboard would like to find out that information to try to make the comparison more helpful.
 - f. There was some discussion about which municipalities in the list would be best to compare to based on their similarity to Canterbury.
 - g. There was discussion about what will happen when Ken eventually retires. Both Ken and Fire Chief Michael Gamache are retired and thus limited to 32 hours a week. Any newer retirees would be limited to 26 hours per week. When Ken retires, if the salary is too low, the Town won't be able to hire a new TA without a big hike.
 - h. There was discussion about bringing Ken's salary up to be comparable to towns similar to Canterbury. This could be done with a series of raises over several years, similar to what the Selectboard are proposing to do with the Police Chief. Beth did some calculations of what difference percent raises would look like over the next 5 years.
 - i. There was discussion about the merits of full-time vs part-time employees and what mix of TA and support staff might be best for Canterbury. PT prevents having to spend money on benefits like healthcare. The staff in the office are all currently PT and the Selectboard wouldn't want to lose anyone by changing a position to FT. Canterbury prides itself on being a PT gov't with a very active volunteering culture.
 - j. The cost of healthcare is a particular concern. A family plan costs about \$35K a year, so a FT employee choosing to take the health plan or the buyout can dramatically change a department's budget. Currently the entire Police Dept. take the buyout because they are in the Army National Guard. If that changes, it could be a monumental tax swing in one year.
 - k. Beth emphasized the importance of doing things like the new Police Dept. Report to show exactly what we are paying for. Extensive preparation like what the Selectboard is doing now could have been helpful during the 2021 Town Meeting.
 - l. Calvin questioned if employees who are already retired should get the same increases as other employees. Since they already receive pensions and are less likely to have expenses such as mortgage, student loans, and childcare, it is more important to focus on compensation for non-retired employees.

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- m. Scott and Beth disagreed with that idea. You can't assume someone's financial situation, the retirees did years of work to earn whatever pension they may be receiving, and it is important to appropriately compensate someone for the work they are currently doing regardless of whatever else is happening in their lives.
 - n. Kal will make a spreadsheet with the info from the article and Beth's calculations. They will find out which municipalities have PT or FT positions.
 - o. There was some discussion about how Ken often works more hours than he is required to in order to make sure the job is done well. Calvin pointed out that Ken is very efficient at the TA job because of his experience; when the next TA is hired they may need more time to complete the same tasks, potentially even FT hours.
 - p. The Selectboard decided to focus on bringing up Ken's salary to an appropriate level first. They want to discuss the future of the office and what staffing needs to be long-term with Ken since he has the most insight into what needs doing. The Selectboard did the same with former Police Chief Michael Labrecque when he announced his retirement 2 years ahead of time.
 - q. The Selectboard will start doing work sessions like this once a month to further explore wages and staffing. The next will be June 5th at 8:30 a.m. in the Sam Lake House.
 - r. There was discussion about if the Selectboard should have the Budget Committee meet more. Currently the BC is very informal, only meeting a couple times a year at Selectboard meetings. If they had their own meetings, they could have more time to assess the budget and bring detailed recommendations to the Selectboard.
 - s. The Selectboard reviewed the drafted Police Chief contract and requested some grammatical edits.
3. Septic System Agreement
- a. See Selectboard minutes 5/4/26 section 6.b. for previous discussion.
 - b. Scott provided an update on the negotiations. Everyone is working well together.
 - c. Ken is going to contact Web Stout to get a life expectancy of the septic system.
 - d. The Church is intending to put a meter on the outdoor spigot so that outdoor water usage won't be counted towards their usage of the septic system.
 - e. Scott and Ken met with Planning Board Chair Brendan O'Donnell to discuss the changes being made to the Store. The LLC intends to go before the ZBA for the changes. They may eventually need to go to the PB too.
 - f. Scott suggested that the Town start charging an annual fee that would go into a savings account for the eventual replacement of the system. The system will fail eventually and 20 years from now the LLC and Church may not still be the owners of the buildings involved. Starting to save now would prevent the worst case scenario of the Town having to pay for the entire replacement. Such an arrangement might need approval at Town Meeting.
 - g. The Selectboard agreed to that idea.
 - h. Scott and Ken will next be meeting with the LLC 5/13 at 11 a.m. in the Sam Lake House.
4. Jesse Crowell vs Town of Canterbury
- a. The Concord Monitor published an article on the case this morning. They had called Ken yesterday to give him a heads up that it was coming out and ask for comment. Primex is handling the situation, so there really isn't anything for Ken or the Selectboard to say.
5. Adjournment
- a. Scott made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 a.m. Beth seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Next Meeting: 2026 May 18, 6:00 p.m. at the Meeting House
Minutes submitted by Kal McKay, Administrative Assistant