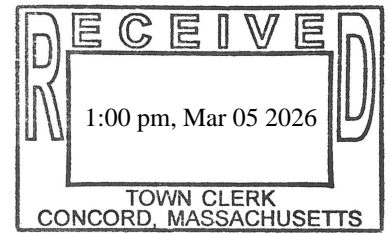


**Select Board  
Meeting Minutes  
January 27, 2026**



Approved 03/02/26

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, the Concord Select Board convened in person on Monday, January 27, 2026 at 5:00 PM at the Town House Select Board Meeting Room and Hearing Room, 22 Monument Sq. The meeting was available for public access in person and via Zoom.

**Call to Order**

Present were: Mark Howell, Chair, Wendy Rovelli, Clerk, Mary Hartman, Paul Boehm (attended remotely) and Cameron McKennitt

Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Ms. Rovelli made the roll call and confirmed that all Select Board members were in attendance, with Mr. Boehm attending remotely.

Chair Howell stated that the Select Board meeting would adjourn at 7:00 PM, at which point the Town Caucus would begin. Chair Howell provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Town Caucus and invited meeting attendees to view the Select Board meeting from the Hearing Room, where there was additional seating. Chair Howell stated that public comments would be limited to two minutes per comment and would be permitted to be inclusive of agenda items. Additionally, Chair Howell reviewed the procedures, norms and expectations for Public Comment. Ms. Rovelli kept time for the speakers.

**Public Comment**

Deb Cavalier Weiss Opal of 38 Annursac Hill Rd. spoke in support of the town adopting the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism. Ms. Cavalier Weiss Opal stated that Judaism is an identity and for some Jews, it is a matter of faith, however for all Jews it is part of their history, peoplehood and self. She also stated that while some Jewish residents support the IHRA definition and some do not, there are Jewish residents who have fear due to lived experiences, and all Jewish residents are asking for protection from hate.

Aris, a student in the Concord Public School System and organizer with the Concord Coalition for Palestine, spoke against the adoption of the IHRA definition. Aris described the parts of the IHRA definition that are troubling, such as, that the definition gives an example of antisemitism that compares Israeli policy and the policies of the Nazis. Aris circulated a petition that gained 250 signatures in support of not adopting the IHRA

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definition. Aris stated that they and many others believe that the IHRA definition is written to protect Israel from any criticism and expressed concern about student's first amendment rights being violated. Aris completed his public comment with the statement, "Free Palestine."

Andrea Foncerrada of 41 Commonwealth Ave, Co-chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission (DEI Commission), speaking as an individual, expressed strong support for the revised DEI Commission charge including explicit language addressing antisemitism within the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Commission's duties and responsibilities.

Michael Ferstenberg argued against conflating antisemitism with opposition to Israel or Israeli policies, especially regarding Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank. Mr. Ferstenberg suggested that the best policy is to combat all forms of discrimination is one that condemns and combats all forms of discrimination equally, not one that calls out antisemitism specifically or prioritizes Jewish residents. Mr. Ferstenberg stated that all forms of prejudice or bias should be called out and can be dealt with through education and a supportive culture that values the humanity of all.

Dan Booth of College Rd. read excerpts from a letter signed by numerous residents and nonresidents affirming the need to promote safety and belonging for all in Concord – Carlisle, including Jewish members of the community. This letter states that the signees welcome a proclamation though urge the Select Board not to adopt the IHRA definition, as it may harm other communities; citing concerns about free speech and open dialogue. Mr. Booth advocated for equity-based frameworks to fight antisemitism.

Kate Malagodi of Commonwealth Ave. summarized concerns regarding the management of Warner's Pond; there was a recommendation to create a management committee to clean up the pond and a charge has been written. Ms. Malagodi stated that the recommended members for the committee support dam removal, which violates the charge itself as people who want the dam removed would not also support preservation of the pond.

Ece Turnator of Cambridge Turnpike stated that the IHRA definition of antisemitism could act as an effective tool to punish criticism of the Israeli government's policies. Ms. Turnator expressed concern that the IHRA definition could have a chilling effect on free speech, especially in the schools. Ms. Turnator stated that there are other definitions that can be used and then shared a letter from a Palestinian-American father regarding his child's experience in a nearby school district that is under the IHRA framework.

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Elizabeth Sacton spoke on behalf of Concord resident Dan Terris of 36 Devens St., who was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Sacton read a letter from Mr. Terris that argued the IHRA definition is the wrong tool for fighting antisemitism as it can be used to wrongly accuse someone, despite their identity and affiliations. The letter also stated that Mr. Terris is a strong supporter of the rights, wellbeing, and dignity of both Jewish and Palestinian people and he supports the efforts of so many in Concord to fight antisemitism.

**Consent Agenda**

Upon a motion duly made by Ms. Rovelli and seconded, it was **UNANIMOUSLY voted:** to approve the Consent Agenda which includes:

- a. Minutes for Approval: January 12, 2026
- b. Executive Session Minutes for Approval but Not Release: January 12, 2026 c. Town Account Warrants: January 12, 2026, January 13, 2026, January 14, 2026, January 20, 2026, January 21, 2026
- d. Tour Guide Licenses – Batch 4
- e. Late Class II License Renewal for William McGonagle of Bill's Auto Sales, 72 Eaton Street
- f. One Day Liquor License for All Alcoholic Beverages for Sarah Sweeney of the Tough Ruck for the Tough Ruck 26.2 Race at The Fenn School, 516 Monument Street on Sunday, April 19, 2026 from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM
- g. Gifts and Donations:
  - i. Gift of Wendy Scully in the amount of \$1250.00 for the care/upkeep or beautification of the Main St. and Old Hill Burial grounds from
  - ii. Gift of Jane Chung for the Council on Aging in the amount of \$500.00
  - iii. Gift of the Alcott School Parent Teacher group in the amount of \$500.00 for recreation scholarships
  - iv. Anonymous gift in the amount of \$1000.00 for the Council on Aging Gift Account

Roll Call Vote:

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Mr. Boehm – Aye

Ms. Hartman – Aye

Chair Howell- Aye

Mr. McKennitt – Aye

Ms. Rovelli - Aye

**Select Board Appointments**

Upon a motion duly made by Ms. Rovelli and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY **voted:** to approve the appointment of Breht Feigh of 149 Spencer Brook Road to fill an unexpired term on the Financial Audit Advisory Committee for a term ending May 31, 2028.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Boehm – Aye

Ms. Hartman – Aye

Chair Howell- Aye

Mr. McKennitt – Aye

Ms. Rovelli - Aye

**Chair's Report**

Chair Howell thanked the staff for adjusting the meeting date to the snow contingency date. Chair Howell shared that some of the staff and Select Board members attended the Massachusetts Municipal Conference that occurred on January 22 -24, where Timothy Shriver delivered the keynote address, which was about dignity and respect in public dialogue. Chair Howell thanked all those who made comments this evening as they reflected the message put forth by the keynote speaker.

**Discussion and Update**

**-FY24 Audit Management Letter**

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Ms. Lafluer made a statement that referenced key points from the letter *FY24 Audit Management Letter, Context, Timing, and Path Forward*, which is included in the meeting packet.

Ms. Barrett provided the presentation *FY 24 Audit Review*, which is included in the meeting packet. The Select Board questions and comments were as follows: Ms. Rovelli, Chair of the Financial Audit Advisory Committee (FAAC), commented that the audit was late last year, and that the issue of timeliness has gotten worse this year. The FAAC, is scheduled to review the audit in mid-February 2026 and may have information to report to the Select Board at the end of February. In response to Mr. Boehm's question about material impacts due to the auditing issues, Ms. Barrett commented that to date there are not any insurmountable impacts. However, some instances were identified where policies may not have been followed, and corrective action will be made at the upcoming Town Meeting. Mr. McKennitt added that material impacts may not be known at this point. Ms. Lafleur added that one impact could have been experienced by budget managers when reviewing their budgets, because of not having timely information. Additionally, Ms. Lafleur stated that the credit rating agency, Moody's, did inquire about the Fiscal 24 balance sheet and requested continuing disclosure. The credit rating has not been impacted. In response to Ms. Hartman's questions, Ms. Barrett replied that the internal control issues have already been addressed, as they were taken care of immediately by establishing an updated process, and in addition updated system procedures and attention have been applied related to budget posting. Regarding the capitalization and cut-off controls, Ms. Barrett stated that accuracy in this area depends on posting within the appropriate timeline. In response to Ms. Hartman's inquiry about the role of the Financial Audit Advisory Board, Ms. Rovelli replied that the board will hear a presentation from the auditor and have an opportunity to collect more in-depth knowledge, after which the board will provide a report to the Select Board. Ms. Lafleur described the composition of members represented on the FAAC and shared that the board meets 4-6 times per year, or more frequently if the board prefers. In response to Mr. McKennitt's inquiry regarding whether the material weaknesses were highlighted as deficiencies in previous years, Ms. Barrett answered that yes a few of the weaknesses were highlighted in previous years, to which Mr. McKennitt expressed concern regarding the nature of ongoing weaknesses. Additional questions from Mr. McKennitt yielded the following information: Regarding the Light Plant reconciliation, Ms. Barrett stated that the new reconciliation procedures will be applied to transaction over the last six months which will assist the Light Plant with the reconciliation and CY2025 audit completion. Regarding the 45 day reconciliation timeline, Ms. Barrett provided the reasoning for choosing the 45-day timeline, and how it compares to best practices.

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**-FY 25 Audit Progress and Process**

Ms. Barrett stated that the town had previously hired Clifton, Larson, Allen (CLA) Consulting Firm and that they have been instrumental in assisting the Finance Team to develop effective processes. A second team, Roselli, Clark and Associates has been in house, starting this past week, performing the FY25 Town audit. This decision was made due to the slowness and non-responsiveness of the current audit firm the town was working with. Ms. Barrett estimated that the FY25 audit process should be completed within a few months, assuming town staff continues to be responsive to auditor requests. The town's objective is to restore a normal audit cadence by mid-summer, which would enable the start of fieldwork for the FY26 Town audit. In response to Mr. McKennitt's inquiry regarding why the Audit Committee was not involved in the decision to change auditors, which it is supposed to be per the charge, Ms. Barrett shared that the FAAC does have input into which consulting firms are hired, however being that there are only three large auditing firms in MA, it can be hard to find a firm that is available. Ms. Rovelli expressed that she was very frustrated with the speed of completing the current audit and she welcomed the perspective of a new team. However, she also noted that it is part of the FAAC's charge to make a recommendation for a new auditor.

**-FY 26 Free Cash**

Ms. Barrett reported on the status of Free Cash certification, noting that the balance sheet and supplemental documents were submitted to the Department of Revenue on January 15<sup>th</sup> and it has been indicated that the Town of Concord is tenth in line to be reviewed. Ms. Barrett is hoping to hear back next week regarding the FY 26 Free Cash certification (available for appropriation). Ms. Barrett stated that Schedule A will be submitted to the state by the end of this week. Chair Howell stated that understanding available Free Cash is very useful in the guideline setting process.

**-FY 27 Revised Proposal to Meet Budget Guideline**

Ms. Barrett presented the *Fiscal Year 2027 Town Government Operating Budget* slide deck. Mr. Boehm provided feedback on the data that is included on the slide and requested amendments be made to the *Town Government Operating Budget* slide to include only the FY27 Proposed budget as of 1/19/26 which the Select Board is most interested in. Ms. Hartman requested that the FY 26 run rate be included in the next

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version of the *Town Government Operating Budget* slide. The Select Board members each provided input on their preference for the inclusion of data on this specific slide. Ms. Barrett noted that Information Technology (IT) costs that have been moved to the department responsible for managing those applications. Ms. Barrett stated that the town owns the clickers needed for elections. Ms. Zammuto confirmed that an increase of \$10K for Economic Vitality & Tourism will be used to support outreach activity. Ms. Rovelli requested clarity regarding the housing services assessment. Mr. McKennitt requested information regarding return on investment for the Economic Vitality and Tourism budget, such as increases in revenue or grant money. In response to Mr. McKennitt's inquiry regarding the increase in dispatch spending, Ms. Lafleur stated that part of the increase includes \$100,000 that has been set aside for per diem dispatch needs so that two dispatchers can be on duty seven days a week. At the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting, Ms. Lafleur will provide the Select Board with updated information about regional dispatch opportunities.

Ms. Porter provided information about the union dispatch agreement and related FY27 budget. The most significant change was moving dispatchers from a minimum, midpoint, maximum scale to a five-step plan, aligning them with other town unions. In the first year (FY25), the collective increase was 9.43% to address market rate adjustments and placement equity, as the group was "notably below market". The Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) is set at 1.75% for both FY26 and FY27. When including step increases and COLA, the total increase is 6.5% for FY26 and 5.6% for FY27. Employees already at the top step will only receive the 1.75% COLA. There is a 4.5% increase between each step. New longevity steps were also added for 10, 15, and 20 years of service. Most current dispatchers are positioned between steps two and four. In response to Mr. Boehm's inquiry regarding cost savings goals for implementing regional dispatch, Ms. Lafleur stated that it is too early to discuss.

Mr. McKennitt inquired regarding the money that was allocated for fixing the roads, and whether staff salary supporting the program is included in the capital funding. Ms. Lafleur answered that there is not, but there has been discussion about having outside resources provide project management, and that cost would be born within the project. The salary expense associated with staff engineers on the project would not be capitalized. Mr. McKennitt suggested this be considered if changes are needed in the budget.

Ms. Barrett stated that starting with the slide *Town Government Operating Budget* Line No. 12 for Joint Account, the data is subject to change, therefore this is a status update only. Ms. Barrett stated that both the group and property/liability insurance line items should come down from the respective 14.5% and 14.4% projected increase. In

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response to Mr. McKennitt's inquiry regarding the Tier 2 purchase of two new plows, Ms. Barrett stated that the two new plows are part of the regular purchasing cycle and that the ones that will be replaced are at their end of life.

**Update on Antisemitism and Bias Initiatives**

**-Discussion and Vote: DEI Commission Charge**

Chair Howell stated that he distributed a draft of the DEI Commission charge to the Select Board prior to the meeting, and the Select Board is scheduled to vote to approve it this evening. The Select Board has discussed the charge at several prior meetings. Chair Howell noted two minor errors in spelling/word deletion that need to be made. Mr. McKennitt shared a printed version of comments that he made on the draft. Mr. McKennitt requested to change the way that diversity is defined in the charge. Mr. McKennitt proposed changing the definition of diversity to the presence and acceptance of differences including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion disability...etc." Chair Howell clarified that the change would be; to add the words "the presence and acceptance of differences" and remove the words "refers to population groups that have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in social political or economic situations or subjected to discrimination, bias or prejudice." Mr. Boehm suggested that the definition of diversity within the DEI Commission may be different than in a dictionary definition of diversity, citing that historically the DEI Commission's focus is on historically underrepresented or marginalized populations. Mr. McKennitt suggested an alternative revision; "Diversity refers to the presence and acceptance of all population groups including those that have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in social, political or economic institutions or subject to discrimination, bias or prejudice." Ms. Rovelli and Chair Howell expressed their support of this revision, while Mr. Boehm expressed continued disagreement with the proposed revision. Ms. Rovelli suggested adding the words, ...all group and "in particular." Ms. Rovelli read the final revision which was, "Diversity is the presence and acceptance of all groups including in particular population groups that have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in social, political or economic situations are subjected to discrimination, bias or prejudice including but not limited to not race, ethnicity..."

Upon a motion duly made by Ms. Rovelli and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY **voted:** to approve the revised DEI Commission charge with the edits discussed.



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Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Boehm – Aye

Ms. Hartman – Aye

Chair Howell- Aye

Mr. McKennitt – Aye

Ms. Rovelli - Aye

**-Discussion and\_Vote: Proclamation Affirming the Town of Concord's  
Commitment to Opposing Antisemitism**

Chair Howell introduced the agenda item with a statement that focused on compassionate engagement, acknowledging the acts of bias and hate that have occurred in Concord and communicated to the Jewish community that the Select Board stands with them. Chair Howell stated that everyone deserves dignity, care and respect and that everyone is welcome in Concord. Chair Howell expressed the importance of getting started on the work of teaching our children to respect all people and disagree without demeaning, which will build a better world. Chair Howell noted that the proclamation was amended to be signed on January 27 (International Holocaust Remembrance Day) due to the rescheduling of the Select Board meeting from January 26. Ms. Hartman expressed her support of the proclamation and stated that as a member of the Select Board, she has received feedback that supports this definition, while she realizes that not everyone supports the definition. Mr. Boehm expressed his support for the proclamation, stating that he appreciated the emails and conversations regarding the topic and that the proclamation has received overwhelming support from the Concord citizens, Jewish community and Jewish faith community, but not universal support. Mr. Boehm noted many features of the IHRA definition and noted that there is support for it from many institutions. Mr. McKennitt shared that he and Ms. Lafleur researched the proclamations of eight other communities, and thanked Ms. Lafleur for her work on the project. Mr. McKennitt stated that the intention of the Select Board is to do something meaningful and that the Select Board cares that the people of Concord are treated well and treated equally. Ms. Rovelli thanked everyone who wrote to the Select Board and shared that there has been support from the state and from the DEI Commission regarding the definition.

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Upon a motion duly made by Ms. Rovelli and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY **voted:** to approve the Proclamation affirming the Town of Concord's commitment to opposing antisemitism, adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and promoting a welcoming and inclusive community.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Boehm – Aye

Ms. Hartman – Aye

Chair Howell- Aye

Mr. McKennitt – Aye

Ms. Rovelli – Aye

Ms. Rovelli read the proclamation.

**Discussion: Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

Chair Howell stated that the Solicitation by Law, sponsored by the Select Board, is included in the meeting packet and that there are 52 warrant articles and 4 citizen petitions that have been submitted. The list of articles will be available soon.

**Liaison Reports**

Ms. Hartman and Ms. Rovelli's Liaison Reports are included in the meeting packet.

Upon a motion duly made by Ms. Rovelli and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY **voted:** to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 PM.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Boehm – Aye

Ms. Hartman – Aye

Chair Howell- Aye

Mr. McKennitt – Aye

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Ms. Rovelli – Aye

The Select Board members that were in person moved to the Hearing Room to view the Town Caucus, while Mr. Boehm did not attend as there was not a remote participation option for the Town Caucus. There was no deliberation or comments from the Select Board Members.

[Meeting Packet](#)

[Meeting Recording](#)