

SELECT BOARD

MINUTES

September 24, 2025



Board met in HYBRID session at 7:00 p.m. at Abbot Hall, 188 Washington Street, Select Board Meeting Room

The following Board members were present constituting a quorum:

M. C. Moses Grader, Chair Pro Tem
Alexa J. Singer
James R. Zisson

Thatcher W. Kezer III, Town Administrator

The Town Administrator called the meeting of September 24, 2025, to order and noted with the Chair absent the first order of business is to nominate a Chair Pro Tem for this meeting. Motion made to appoint Moses Grader Chair Pro Tem for the September 24, 2025 Select Board meeting. Moved by Mrs. Singer, seconded by Mr. Zisson. All in favor.

The Chair announced this meeting is being recorded.

PUBLIC COMMENT. The following public comment was taken:

- Albert Jordan addressed the Board stating he believes the Town should hold a Special Town Meeting to vote on the MBTA Communities 3A to allow taxpayers to make informed decisions moving forward and noted issues of intimidation at previous town meetings.
- Michelle Bell urged the Select Board to take the final steps necessary to designate Marblehead a Green Community.
- Albert Jordan spoke against Marblehead becoming a Green Community.
- Addie Flynn spoke about the proposed bus lane on the Lynnway and feels that residents are not being made aware of this and there will be a significant impact on anyone travelling the Lynnway from Marblehead and Swampscott and urged people to go to the meetings and respond to the surveys.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE. The Town Administrator provided a consolidated summary of key ongoing projects, operational updates, and upcoming initiatives currently underway across town departments.

Fiber Network Transition

The Town's switchover to the new municipal fiber network is scheduled for September 28, 2025. Engineers will be on-site at Abbot Hall, the Fire Department, Police Department, Highway Department, and other critical facilities during the transition to

confirm system functionality. Town staff and IT contractors will continue monitoring closely throughout the process to minimize disruption. This fiber project was made possible through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which the Town allocated to create a new municipal fiber loop connecting all municipal facilities, water and sewer pump stations, and major intersections. The investment is designed to significantly improve bandwidth and provide **redundancy** across the municipal network, strengthening both daily operations and emergency resiliency.

An additional goal of this infrastructure improvement is to enhance public meeting accessibility. The expanded bandwidth and redundant connections will support the Town's capacity to video stream Select Board, School Committee, and other board and committee meetings, building on the recommendations of the Article 44 Committee established by the 2022 Town Meeting. That committee studied ways to improve transparency and public access to local government, and the fiber project provides the technological foundation needed to carry that work forward.

Elevator Projects – Abbot Hall and Old Town House

The long-awaited Abbot Hall elevator modernization project is in its final stage. A pre-inspection has already been completed with positive results, and the project is now awaiting the official state inspection. Once approved, the elevator will return to full service, restoring accessibility for staff and the public.

At the same time, the Town is facing significant challenges with the accessibility lift at the Old Town House. The lift has reached the end of its life cycle, is failing more often than it is operational, and cannot support the frequency of runs needed for public events and elections at the building. Numerous maintenance calls have been required to temporarily restore service, but the equipment is no longer reliable. This creates risk of violating ADA requirements if all floors are not consistently accessible and we may need to limit future events at the Old Town House until a permanent solution is identified. Staff will be analyzing the costs of full replacement and developing options for consideration in the next iteration of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Beauport Ambulance Performance

As previously reported to the Select Board, Beauport Ambulance officially assumed ambulance service in Marblehead on August 15. In its first full month of operation, Beauport responded to 97 calls with an average response time of 7.5 minutes, reflecting strong service capacity and efficiency. The Fire Chief expressed his satisfaction with Beauport's early performance, noting both the positive reporting metrics and the absence of resident complaints.

Beauport Ambulance will soon be relocating operations to 8 Sewall Street, the former location of the Town's previous ambulance vendor, once upgrades to the facility are completed. In the interim, temporarily hosting Beauport at the Fire Station has proven beneficial, as it allowed fire personnel and ambulance staff to work closely together from the outset. This arrangement helped foster strong relationships, communication, and

trust between the two teams, which will be essential as they continue to respond side-by-side to emergency medical situations in the community.

Village Street Bridge Replacement Project (MassDOT Project No. 612947)

The Village Street Bridge Replacement Project has now advanced to the 25% design review stage with MassDOT, marking a key milestone in this critical infrastructure effort. As part of the 25% submission, the Town received correspondence on September 8, 2025, from Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) addressed to the Select Board. This letter initiates the required early environmental coordination and public outreach process. The Village Street Bridge (M-04-001), constructed in 1939, spans the Marblehead Rail Trail and Highland Terrace. It is a structurally deficient bridge that has exceeded its useful life and now presents safety and accessibility challenges. The bridge serves as a vital east–west route for local traffic, provides an emergency access corridor for fire apparatus, and carries a water main that is essential to Town operations. Its replacement is necessary to prevent further deterioration and to ensure the continued safety and reliability of the roadway and supporting infrastructure.

The project scope includes the removal of the existing superstructure and replacement with a precast concrete rigid frame bridge, widened sidewalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, striped shoulders, and roadway improvements from Byors Road to Heritage Way. The design also proposes realignment of the off-street access path to the Marblehead Rail Trail and staged construction that will maintain alternating one-way traffic on Village Street while temporarily closing the rail trail underpass.

MassDOT has determined that the project is eligible for Federal Aid highway funding, with an estimated Total Federal Participating Construction Cost (TFPCC) of \$4.45 million. Final funding decisions will be made by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) as part of its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Projects such as this typically take several years to advance through the MPO’s approval and funding process, requiring continued design progression, environmental permitting, and right-of-way coordination.

At the same time, the Town recognizes the importance of our MBTA 3A zoning compliance status. We will continue to work with MassDOT and state officials to determine what, if any, impact non-compliance may have on the progress and prioritization of this project within the MPO process. Despite this uncertainty, staff will remain focused on advancing the design and keeping this critical project moving forward through each stage of the state and federal review process.

The replacement of the Village Street Bridge will address significant structural deficiencies, improve accessibility and safety for all users, and preserve an essential emergency and utility route. Staff will continue to update the Select Board as the project advances through MassDOT’s milestones and the MPO’s funding process.

TOWN CHARTER COMMITTEE. Update. Amy Drinker, Chair, and Rosanna Ferrante, Co-Chair, appeared before the Board to provide an update on the progress of the

charter review process, highlighting the need for feedback from town entities and committees. The committee aims to submit a final draft to the Select Board by January 2026 for town meeting approval, with potential implementation by 2028. A discussion followed with questions being asked by the Board.

PUBLIC HEARING. LICENSING. Wine Malt Package Store License. Flores Mantilla, 164 Washington Street. The Chair called the public hearing to order. Nancy Mantilla, applicant, and Attorney Elizabeth Pisano appeared before the Board to present their application for a Wine Malt Beverage Package Store License for Flores Mantilla, 164 Washington Street. No one spoke opposed or in favor of the applicant. The Public Hearing was closed. After review by the Board a motion was made to approve the application for a Wine/Malt Beverage Package Store License for Flores Mantilla Inc., d/b/a Flores Mantilla, 164 Washington Street, as presented. Hours of operation Monday – Saturday 9:00 am – 6:00 pm, Sundays 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, subject to receipt of the required fees, forms, department sign offs, approval from the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission and CORI approval. Moved by Mrs. Singer, seconded by Mr. Zisson. On a polled vote the Board voted as follows: Mrs. Singer, in favor; Mr. Zisson, in favor; Mr. Grader, in favor.

BOARD OF HEALTH. Creating a Healthier Marblehead (CAHM). Thomas Massaro, Chair, Board of Health, and Caitlyn Coyle, Collins Center for Public Management, UMass Boston, appeared before the Board to present the Marblehead Community Wellness Survey that will be available to all residents over the age of 18 on October 1st. The purpose of this project is to document and describe the most pressing needs related to wellness for Marblehead residents which in turn will help inform future Board of Health decisions and assist in their strategic planning. Caitlyn Coyle spoke to the procedures that have been taken to insure data security. All procedures have been approved by the Institutional Review Board at UMass Boston (UMB). Only researchers from UMB will have access to the data and the raw data will not be shared directly with the Town. The Board of Health encourages all residents over 18 to take the survey which is being mailed via postcard and available on the Town website and in hardcopy as well. The survey will be conducted in partnership with UMass Boston and funded by local organizations including the Rotary Club of Marblehead.

TAXATION AIDE COMMITTEE. Interviews/Appointments. The Town Administrator reviewed the background on this committee, which has been dormant for some time. This committee supports Marblehead's elderly and disabled residents and the committee needs to restore its active role in administering the Taxation Aide Fund. The following applicants appeared before the Board seeking appointment to the Taxation Aide Committee: Meredith Reardon and Phyllis Smith. After discussion with both applicants the following motions were made:

Motion made and seconded to appoint Meredith Reardon to the Taxation Aide Committee with a term to expire in June 2026. All in favor.

Motion made and seconded to appoint Phyllis Smith to the Taxation Aide Committee with a term to expire in June 2026. All in favor.

COUNCIL ON AGING. Interviews/Appointments. Andy Gillis appeared before the Board seeking appointment to the Council on Aging. After discussion, motion made and seconded to appoint Andy Gillis to the Council on Aging with a term to expire in June 2028. All in favor.

2024 MARBLHEAD ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL REPORT.

Aleesha Benjamin, Chief Financial Officer and Tony Roselli and Paul Gargano, Partners, Roselli, Clark & Associates, appeared before the Board to present the annual audit report on the town's financial management, performed in accordance with GAGA (Yellow Book), which requires review of internal controls over major transactions. The Town has a strong bond rating and consistent revenue and expense forecasting, which generates excess appropriation for capital projects and OPEB funding. The town's reserve balance and financial metrics are well managed, with a surplus that can be used for future projects. Also addressed were the town's long-term obligations, including pension and OPEB liabilities, with the recommendation of targeting additional funding for OPEB in the future. The town's recent improvement in investment income and the importance placed on cybersecurity training for employees was also noted. Lastly, the report notes material weaknesses in the town's cash and bank reconciliation processes, which needs to be addressed to ensure timely financial statements and maintain the town's bond rating. Aleesha Benjamin, CFO, reported that the town has already implemented procedures that address these concerns.

The Board asked questions and made comments, thanking the team for a thorough presentation.

APPEAL. Article IV, Curb Cuts, 255-13, Section G. 421-423 Ocean Avenue. Tom Saltsman, Agent of the Owner, Saltsman Brenzel, appeared before the Board to appeal a denial of a curb cut by the Department of Public Ways at 421-423 Ocean Avenue. Amy McHugh, DPW Director came to the table as well. After review and discussion the Board expressed concerns about the arbitrary nature of these regulations and the need for clear criteria to approve deviations. The Board agreed to remand the decision to further discussion, with staff tasked to research the history and intent of the regulations and develop criteria for approving driveway modifications. They requested input from various town departments and set a deadline of the end of October to report back to the Board. The discussion on the Appeal is tabled. No votes were taken.

LICENSING. Wine and Malt Beverage License w. Cordials, Le Ros Thai Asian Cuisine, 26 Hawkes Street. Change of Manager. Ronald O. Szarkowski appeared before the Board seeking a Change of Manager on the alcoholic beverage license at Le Ros Thai Asian Cuisine. Motion made to approve the application from Le Ros Thai Asian Cuisine, 26 Hawkes Street, for a Change of Manager on the Wine Malt Beverage License, 06982-RS-0656, to Ronald O. Szarkowski subject to receipt of the required fees, forms, Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission and CORI approval. Moved by Mrs.

Singer, seconded by Mr. Zisson. On a polled vote the Board voted as follows: Mr. Zisson, in favor; Mrs. Singer, in favor; Mr. Grader, in favor.

MARBLEHEAD BICYCLE FACILITIES PLAN. Presentation. Logan Casey, Sustainability Coordinator, appeared before the board to present a draft Bicycle Facilities Plan to the Board. No votes were taken.

RESERVE FUND TRANSFER. Police Department. Aleesha Benjamin, Chief Financial Officer, appeared before the board to review the request for a Reserve Fund Transfer for the Police Department. After review, motion made and seconded to authorize Chief King to appear before the Finance Committee to request the transfer of the sum of twelve thousand two hundred sixty one and 00/100 dollars (\$12,261.00) from the Reserve Fund in accordance with chapter 40, section 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws, for unforeseen response related to the release of petroleum identified during removal & closure of underground storage tank. All in favor.

PROCLAMATION. Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Motion made and seconded to proclaim October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month and prepare a proclamation on behalf of this. All in favor.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS, GENERAL Motion made and seconded to approve the following Consent Agenda Items:

MINUTES of September 10, 2025

PRIVATE DRAIN CONNECTION, License - between the Town and Michael and Shawn Fresoni, 155 Jersey Street, as presented, and authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the Board.

ABBOT HALL, Marblehead High School, May 7 – 29, 2026 – request from Shirley Huller White, Lead Teacher/Instructor, Visual Art, AP Art History, MHS, for the annual MHS and Veterans Middle School Art Show and opening reception on May 14, 2026, from 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. subject to the usual rules, regulations and fees paid to the Town and receipt of the required Certificate of Insurance.

MHS Annual Boosters Drive, Sunday, October 5, 2025, 12:00 noon – 3:00 p.m.

ABBOT HALL, Congressman Seth Moulton, Veterans Town Hall, November 11, 2025, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. –subject to the usual rules, regulations and fees paid to the Town and receipt of the required Certificate of Insurance.

ABBOT HALL or OLD TOWN HOUSE, Festival of Arts, Friday, October 17, 2025, First Look Party subject to the usual rules, regulations and fees paid to the Town and receipt of the required Certificate of Insurance.

TEMPORARY PARKING RESTRICTIONS. Chamber of Commerce, Trick or Treat Business Districts, October 30, 2025 – request for street closures on Thursday, October 30, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. subject to approval from Police Chief as follows:

- Detour traffic at end of Pleasant Street to go left onto Washington Street
- Detour traffic on Washington Street to go left onto Rockaway Street
- Road closure at top of Summer Street

All in favor.

LICENSING. One Day Liquor. Festival of Arts. Old Town House or Abbot Hall.

Motion to approve the request from Festival of Arts for a One Day Liquor License. Beer and Wine only, on Friday, October 17, 2025, at the Old Town House or Abbot Hall, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. subject to the following conditions:

- Delivery of and receipt by the Licensing Authority of the required fee (\$50).
- Delivery of and receipt by the Licensing Authority of Proof that the alcohol will be purchased from an authorized source.
- Proof that the applicant can receive proper delivery; provide proper storage and disposal of all alcoholic beverages purchased all in accordance with the requirements of G. L. c. 138.
- Receipt of the required Certificate of Insurance
- Alcohol is not allowed on the premises overnight.
- Alcohol will be purchased from Martignetti / Carolina Wine and Beverage

Moved by Mrs. Singer, seconded by Mr. Grader. On a polled vote the Board voted as follows: Mr. Zisson, in favor; Mrs. Singer, in favor; Mr. Grader, in favor.

CONTRACT. 26-04 Mary Alley Municipal and Jacobi Community Center Roof Replacement Project. Motion made and seconded to award contract 26-04, Mary Alley Municipal and Jacobi Community Center Roof Replacement Project between the Town and **MDM Engineering Company Inc.** in the amount of Eight Hundred Thirty-Nine Thousand Dollars and 00/100 (\$839,00.00) and authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the Board. All in favor.

CONTRACT. 26-05 Hamond Nature Center Timber Stair Repair Project. Motion made and seconded to award contract 26-05, Hamond Nature Center Timber Stairs Repair Project between the Town and **Northeast Trailworks LLP**, in the amount of nineteen thousand dollars and 00/100 (\$19,00.00) and authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the Board. All in favor.

SELECT BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS. None.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.



Kyle A. Wiley
Administrative Aide

List of documents used: Flores Mantilla Liquor License application / BOH draft survey / 2024 ACFR / Resumes: Meredith Reardon, Phyllis Smith, Andrew Gillis / Johnny Rays Music Emporium application / Le Ros Liquor License application, change of manager / draft Marblehead Bike facilities plan / Reserve Fund request, police / Domestic Violence Proclamation / Sept. 10th minutes / Private Drain Connection / MHS request for Abbot Hall Spring Art Show/ MHS Boosters annual drive / Abbot Hall, Veterans Town Hall / Old Town House/AH Festival of Arts / 1 Day Liquor FoArts / Contract(s) Hamond Nature Center, MA and Jacobi Center Roof Repairs.