

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Wednesday, February 18, 2026
Preston Town Hall - Lower-level Conference Room**

Call to Order - Sandra Allyn-Gauthier called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

Roll Call

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier

Jerry Grabarek

Ken Zachem - *excused*

Also Present

Cindy Varricchio - Finance Director

Kimberly Lang - Recording Secretary

Public - 6

Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2026 - Regular Meeting

Jerry Grabarek motioned to approve the January 28, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Correspondence - None

Reports - None

Appointments and/or Resignations - None

Business

1. Budget Workshop

a. Registrar of Voters

The various accomplishments with the many regulation changes achieved in the past year were shared as well as what the group hopes to continue working on in the coming year. There is an approximate **\$4,600 increase** due to the required maintenance of the new tabulators. Grant funds had helped to offset their budget in the past, it's not sure if grant funds will be available moving forward.

b. Insurance/Risk Management

The Town continues to partner with the school district with regards to insurance coverage. The 3-year stabilization agreement that was entered into last year is as follows:

FY2025 - 0% increase; FY2026 - 3% increase; FY 2027 - 3% increase. Therefore, the projected increase is expected to be \$4,539. This covers: worker's compensation, property & liability, cyber security, bonds for both the tax collector and town clerk. It was pointed out that CIRMA is a company that traditionally gives back money to its members. It was stressed that the give backs aren't guaranteed, however, CIRMA has typically returned \$10,000 - \$15,000 to the Town.

c. Resident State Trooper

Those in attendance were reminded that last year voters reduced the number of State Troopers from two to one, however the Town still paid for two troopers for the month of July until the budget was passed and paperwork finalized. The various services and programs that the Trooper is involved with were shared as well as the installation and implementation of flock cameras. The Trooper Fisher works to secure grants that are beneficial to the Town among his other duties. Considering the cost of various programs, the reduction in staff, and the State's forecasting cost for the present trooper there is an expected decrease of \$6,500.

d. Public Health

Public Health is composed of several organizations and entities that provide needed services to the citizens of the Town. The two largest organizations are Uncas Health District and UFCS. Uncas Health provides support services to Preston for a cost that is determined per capita, their services will have a \$1,600 increase. UFCS provides health care and community outreach as well as other services to the Town. They are a federal entity requesting \$40,000 from the Town this year, which is a \$5,500 decrease over last year's request. There are also several local services that the Town supports due to the various services they provide for the citizens of Preston. This category has an overall decrease of approximately \$2,900.

e. Senior Affairs

Fran Minor was present while it was shared that ARPA funds were used for much needed repairs and improvements to the Senior Center parking lot and entry way. A grant was procured to reupholster 30 chairs to improve their aesthetics and usability. The lengthy list of services provided by Senior Affairs was reviewed. It was pointed out that many services and activities are possible due to the partnering with various entities. This category is requesting a \$725 increase.

f. Youth Service Bureau

It was stated that YSB and Parks and Recreation work on many programs and activities together and share staff. This past year they continued many of the traditional activities, but also implemented several new programs such as Screen Free Week. It was explained that the Town receives \$21,000 from the State and the Town must match roughly \$14,000. This category is requesting a \$1,546 increase.

g. Parks and Recreation

Mark Simmons was present as the many activities, programs, and events that were successfully executed this year were reviewed. It was pointed out that the 11 community events organized by the Parks & Rec stimulated the local economy and boosted civic pride. Two of the six new community events were the Wicked Tulip Picnic and the Carnival. This year they are hoping to increase programs offered, implement the STEAP Grant by the construction of the bandstand and 3 pickleball courts, as well as use the small grant from Jewett City Savings bank to hold a 12-week Farmer's Market. It was noted that excluding staff; this category has a **flat budget.**

h. Debt Services

A brief history of the Town's debt standing was shared. The various areas of debt and the recommended calculations of debt were shared pointing out that Preston is in good standing with its low debt amount. The debt payments are decreasing and this year it's slightly over **\$19,000.**

i. Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Enforcement Officer is contracted through SCOGG. The Town had entered a three-grant program which allowed the Town to pay 25%, 50%, and then 75% of the ZEO's salary for a set number of hours. That program has ended and the Town is now responsible for 100% of the salary. The ZEO is requesting an increase in her hours from 38 to 45 hours per month. This will **increase this budget by approximately \$12,600.**

j. Inland Wetlands and Watercourses

This Commission reviewed and acted on 16 applications, 2 As of Rights, and conducted 1 Public Hearing this past year. They will continue to review applications and update their regulations to ensure the preservation of the wetlands and watercourse in Preston. Excluding the Wetlands Agent's salary this budget requests an **increase of \$139.**

k. Conservation and Agriculture Commission

They are charged with being stewards of our environment and hope to sponsor a Regional Informational Farmers Venue that will be beneficial to the area. They would like to once again request \$15,000 to be added to the Open Space Fund as part of their budget. It was noted that this was asked for last year and removed from their budget. This year's budget is an **increase of \$15,123** largely due to the request for Open Space.

l. Ethics Commission

This vital group is asking for a **flat budget of \$680.**

m. Preston Redevelopment Agency

A brief history of the Hospital Property/Riverwalk project was reviewed. The various parcels and their status were shared. It was stated that reallocation of funds was done in order to continue the cleanup efforts at the site.

A brief break was called at 5:35 P.M. to allow for the arrival of Sean Nugent, Chair of PRA. The meeting resumed at 5:43 P.M.

Mr. Nugent shared copies of the PRA's proposed budget providing that conveyance is completed by June 30, 2026. That date is dependent on various factors, but the PRA is aggressively working to complete the environmental process. He pointed out that legal fees last year were \$179,000 and this year will be significantly less. **This year's budget request is \$42,662 if the conveyance can be completed by the end of June.**

Sean Nugent shared that after conveyance the PRA will have 4 tasks:

- The Funding of the 9 million which is now 10 million is the responsibility of the Town through the PRA
- If the original plans are different from the original, that is the responsibility of the PRA and the PZC.
- Any other unknown issues or actions.
- Taxation questions regarding modification of taxes.

2. Special Revenue Fund Policy for Parks & Recreation Programming, Fees, Activities, Fundraising, Special Events, Facilities and Services

The draft was shared with Board members; it was explained to the audience that this policy was written as a rectification suggested by the auditors. Policy writing to govern various accounts to ensure proper expenditure of funds has been an ongoing process that explicitly sets guidelines for the various Town accounts. Policies are important to ensure that proper procedures are followed to access funds. This particular draft is a policy to follow when dealing with Parks and Receptions accounts. The Board will present the policy at the Board of Finance's meeting February 19th for their review and comments. Once that has been done it will come back to the Board of Selectmen for approval.

3. Grant Funding Updates

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared the following update:

- The Eastern Regional Tourism Grant for \$9,500 was awarded to Preston. Mark Simmons pointed out that they never awarded the full \$10,000, but Preston was awarded significantly more than last year. This has a short window in that the funds must be spent by June 15th. It was mentioned that the Eastern Regional Tourism District shared with Mr. Simmons that they felt Preston's application was well written and showed interesting, innovative, and fresh ideas.

Tax Refunds - None

Public Comment and Questions

Andy Depta, 6 McClimon Road, congratulated the PRA for their work as it nears completion. He suggested completing the conveyance on July 4th. It was stated that it will be conveyed as soon as possible.

Thomas Wright, 39 Schoolhouse Rd., asked if there was any data showing the difference between having 1 trooper vs 2 troopers. He was told that data is being compiled, but it's not ready to be shared as yet. Mr. Wright also questioned the Poquetanuck Village Project disrupting the plan for the Farmer's Market. It was shared that the Village Project will be done in stages and that it's hoped that there will be minimal disruption.

Adjournment

Jerry Grabarek motioned to adjourn at 6:06 P.M. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary

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PRESTON, CT.

2026 FEB 19 P 4:00

Cindy Palmer
PRESTON TOWN CLERK

Asst.