

**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.  
Killingworth Town Hall/Remote Access Available**

**BOS Members in Attendance:** First Selectman Eric Couture, Selectmen Joel D’Angelo and Eric Nunes

**BOS Members Absent:** None.

**Visitors:** Eileen Blewett, Shana Paladino-Ripp, John Mancini, Annie Stirna, Regina Regolo (Via Remote), Bill Kosturko (Via Remote), Laura Lefko (Via Remote), Eileen Unger Pleines (Via Remote), Jamie Sciascia (Via Remote)

**Called to Order:** First Selectman Couture called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion #1 - Selectman D’Angelo *Moved* and Selectman Nunes *Seconded* a motion to approve the following sets of Minutes: 1) Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen that was held on Monday, October 14, 2024; and 2) Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen that was held on Monday, September 9, 2024 as presented.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

**Refunds:**

Motion #2 - First Selectman Couture *Moved* and Selectman D’Angelo *Seconded* a motion to approve the following Refunds, all for overpayment, and allow them to follow its normal course as presented.

**Refunds**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Address</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>	<b><u>Reason</u></b>
1. Akcay Gursel Payment	1440 Columbia St. #1011 San Diego, CA 92101	\$11.72	Sec. 12-129 Excess
2. JP Morgan Chase Bank NA	700 Kansas Lane LA4-4053 Monroe, LA 71203	\$50.79	Sec. 12-129 Excess Payment

3. Jeffrey Reilly      804 Route 148      \$82.22      Sec. 12-129 Excess  
Payment

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

**Appointments:**

First Selectman Couture reported that once the Ethics Committee's work is completed based on the Committee's charge, the Committee will be disbanded.

Motion #3: First Selectman Couture *Moved* and Selectman D'Angelo *Seconded* a motion to appoint Gail Elizabeth Buller (Unaffiliated) and Karen A L Perry (Republican) to serve on the Ethics Committee.

*Discussion - Couture stated that both Gail Buller and Karen Perry missed the deadline to swear in at the Town Hall with Town Clerk Dawn Mooney in order to serve on the Ethics Committee so another motion had to be made appointing them to the Committee.*

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

**Budget Report:**

Director of Finance Regolo reported that at the next Board of Selectmen's meeting she will present the results from October. Regolo also updated the Board about her concerns with Parmelee Farm being at 80% of their Budget. Regolo addressed her concerns with the Chair of the Committee, and recommended to come in and sit down with the Board of Selectmen to discuss the remainder of the year.

Couture gave an update on the ARPA funds advising he set up a time for a DAS Contractor to come in to review the projects in order to provide input on keeping it within the boundaries of the costs, further noting he will bring it back to the Board for discussion and approval. Couture met with the Project Manager of the URBAN Grant Funds regarding the Barn project and her suggestion was to split off the ARPA funds component and then handle the Urban Act Grant afterwards which would move things along quicker. Couture also plans on meeting with Parmelee Farm on Thursday.

Couture reported that they received the ADM Report back from the School, noting that Haddam lost another fifty students with Killingworth gaining one, which shifted the ADM against the Town again (this is due to students moving, graduating etc.) Couture noted that a discussion with the Board of Finance and Chairs will take place regarding the Capital Projects.

**Department Reports:**

**Registrars & Town Voters Report -**

First Selectman Couture reported that the Registrars and Town Voters as of last night had approximately 1000 residents turn out for Early Voting. The Registrars and Town Clerk were only expecting approximately 700 people so new ballots were ordered on Wednesday. Couture further reported that the process has been smooth overall. The Board had further discussion

about the Early Voting Budget, with the State providing approximately \$2,000, unfortunately not enough to cover the full amount of expenses. A brief discussion took place about ways to improve future voter turnout.

**Old Business:**

**A. Traffic Safety**

First Selectman Couture reported he met with RiverCog's Metropolitan Planning as well as with the Consultant who is doing the work, and advised that RiverCog thanked everyone in the Community who utilized the Map Tool on their Website noting that there was a ton of information provided from Killingworth. Couture reviewed how to access it: Under the RiverCog's Website, go to the Safe Streets and Roads For All and from there you will locate the Map Tool which will allow a person to place a pin at a location within the RiverCog District, and then leave a comment about it (you can state whether you agree/disagree about a intersection/road etc.) This feedback will be collected for their study. The purpose of the study is to figure out where to direct money and transportation planning in the future with the goal being to reduce traffic fatalities down to zero. Couture reported that RiverCog plans to take the Mapping Tool down in the next month, study it more and then provide a Report to the Board of Selectmen over the next few months.

**B. Schedule of Meetings**

First Selectman Couture provided the Board with a First Read of the 2025 Board of Selectmen Meeting Schedule at the last regular meeting. The Board had no changes; therefore, a motion was brought forth accepting the Schedule as presented. Couture will post the Schedule with Town Clerk Mooney as soon as possible.

Motion #4: Selectman D'Angelo *Moved* and Selectman Nunes *Seconded* a motion to approve the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Schedule for 2025 as presented.

Motion unanimously passed [3-0-0].

**New Business:**

**A. List of 2025 Appointments**

First Selectman Couture provided a list of names of reappointments and advised that a letter will be sent out to Committee members asking if they still wish to serve in their current role or step down. Couture also reported that he will be reaching out to Committee Chairs about possible candidates and also to see if anyone has friends and/or family that is interested in serving on a Committee. This will be added onto the Agenda for December for reappointments. Couture advised that there are some vacant spots that still need to be filled; however, whether to fill them now or in December due to being so late in the year was discussed. Couture advised that Committees are meeting, noting a few that are facing challenges: Open Space due to time

commitments, and Inland/Wetlands due to obtaining quorums.

Shana Paladino-Ripp inquired how the Community knows of these Committee/Board Vacancies since she is fairly new to the Town of Killingworth. Couture advised that the vacancies for Committees are posted on the Town of Killingworth Website and also can be viewed within the Meeting Minutes. Selectman Nunes reviewed the process with Ms. Paladino-Ripp, the representation rules that apply between Democrats, Republicans and Unaffiliated in order to fill those positions evenly. Couture further noted that a Community member doesn't need to go through that process if they choose to Volunteer for an open position.

### **B. Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan**

First Selectman Couture reported that he has reached out to all Committee Chairs to schedule meetings regarding the Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan before sitting down with the Board of Selectmen. Couture met with Chief Darin at the Fire Company and discussed needs assessment, fire truck and other aspects of Capital Planning. Couture has meetings scheduled with: Jim Duffield from Park and Rec; Scott at Parmelee Farm on Thursday; and a meeting on Wednesday with the Library. Couture noted that his plan is to gather feedback, then schedule special meetings with the Board of Selectmen. In addition, Couture reported he met with the Public Works Department and under the Multi Year Plan they have two large trucks coming up: one is for the tri-axle truck and the other is a large plowing sander. Couture's recommendation is to swap their position in terms of purchasing order based on the needs and maintenance costs. The Board had further discussion about associated costs for both trucks. Selectman D'Angelo requested some time to digest the information that Couture sends both him and Selectman Nunes before scheduling the first special meeting. Couture concurred.

### **Public Comment:**

- Eileen Blewett commented about the following: 1) Eileen inquired if the Food Pantry Building could be added onto the Multi Year Capital Plan (MYCIP); 2) Eileen commented about a hate crime that occurred within the Town on private property which made the Community extremely upset. She was disappointed and feels that it would have helped if the Board of Selectmen sent a message out to the Community. Eileen also stated that even though the crime was involving a political sign, it wasn't about politics, it was about the hate crime that happened; 3) Eileen commented about how the "Point of Order" reference brought up by another member of the public was disrespectful since her intention was not to make her comments about a political sided issue.
- Shana Paladino-Ripp, 11 Blueberry Hill Reserve, a mother of a Middle and High School student, echoed the sentiments of Mrs. Blewett, stating her children witnessed the sign as she drove by in the car with them and had to make it a teaching moment for them. Shana feels that what happened last week as well as this morning to the Community was disgusting and disturbing and no one should stand for it regardless of what political side they are on.
- John Mancini, 39 Burr Hill Road, commented about the following: 1) John spoke about

what happened in Town and stated that it is beyond politics, and feels that it is disrespect for Town property and disrespect for Freedom of Expression. John further advised that the damaged sign will be taken down tonight and be replaced within a few days; 2) John spoke about how he is under the impression that Statute, Section 5-4 - For the Appointment of Committees, knowing there is a vacancy, that the Board of Selectmen has an obligation to fill those vacancies within 45 days. John was bringing this forth since the Board spoke of possibly not filing these vacant positions earlier tonight since it's so late in the year. John expressed that he would like to see the Committees fully populated.

- Annie Stirna commented about what happened in Killingworth and feels it was horrible noting she has grandchildren that witnessed the sign and had to use it as a teaching moment for them as did her daughter in-law. Annie stated the incident was reported to the State Trooper, everyone in Town was horrified and it didn't matter what political party you were on. Annie understands that the First Selectman Couture is the Chief of Police but also feels that they shouldn't cross the line between politics and what the governance of the Town does. Lastly, Annie commented about how she is upset about comments being made online about her/Chair of the Board of Finance.
- Laura Lefko, Roast Meat Hill Road, commented on how she feels it is appalling that an elected official on the Board of Finance tried to stop a member of the public from having a conversation about what transpired with the sign and feels there is a crossover of Town government cause Couture is the Chief of Police. Laura further commented how this isn't about politics, it is about someone coming and painting a swastika in the Community on a sign located on a resident's property. Laura feels extremely sad to see all the comments, and very little feedback from the Board of Selectmen. Laura feels that the Town needs an update about the investigation from the Board of Selectmen since she knows the property owners filed a complaint, noting there are a lot of rumors circling and would like them to be addressed.
- Eileen Unger Pleines commented about what happened and the teaching moment is about the swastika. There are a number of second generation Holocaust family survivors in the Town of Killingworth. Eileen suggested taking a step back from politics and remember what that symbol represented and all the pain, suffering and loss of people. Eileen further commented how she went from feeling safe in the Community and waking up feeling unsafe. Eileen shared a personal story of putting a Jewish star on top of her Christmas tree which she puts outside her home every year for her customers. She has been very concerned the past few years about it, this year in particular; 2) Eileen commented that the candy collection for the Seniors in the Beechwood Community was successful and expressed her sincere appreciation to everyone that donated.

## Selectmen's Comments:

### Eric Nunes -

- Nunes read his written comments into the record:

“As the highest elected Republican official and a selectman here in Killingworth, I want to address the recent defacing of a political sign with hateful symbols and offensive language, which included the use of a swastika. This isn't just a political issue; it's about our collective respect for diverse viewpoints and the value of civil discourse. Disagreement is healthy, even essential, but actions like this harm our community spirit. Regardless of our personal beliefs, each of us has a right to express ourselves without fear of vandalism, violence, or disrespect. These actions reflect not only a lack of respect for differing views but also a deeper issue—a crisis of spirit within our community and our nation.

As Richard Nixon profoundly said during his inaugural address in 1969, ***“We have found ourselves rich in goods, but ragged in spirit, we are torn by division, wanting unity. To a crisis of the spirit, we need an answer of the spirit. And To find that answer, we need only look within ourselves.”***

Now more than ever, we—Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and Unaffiliated citizens alike—must stand united to denounce this act of hate and violence. At a time when division threatens to pull us apart, we must look within ourselves and to our shared values for answers.

By listening to "the better angels of our nature," we remember that true greatness is built on simple virtues: goodness, decency, kindness, and respect. These values not only help us overcome what divides us but also helps to cement what unites us. Greatness comes in these simple trappings that underpin communities rich in spirit. These simple virtues are what we need most now to rise above our differences and fortify our unity.

Puritan leader John Winthrop, in 1630, spoke of a "city on a hill"—a vision of the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a community that would serve as a moral example to the world. Let us seize this moment as a call to rise above symbols and language of hate and celebrate what we share as a community. By embracing fundamental virtues—respect, kindness, and unity—we can make Killingworth a place where differing views coexist peacefully, and respect prevails over division.

Let this be a moment where we come together—not as parties, but as neighbors committed to upholding respect and decency. By actively choosing kindness and rejecting hate, we can bridge divides and build a stronger, more resilient community, no matter the outcome of the November 5th election.

- Nunes further commented about how touched he was from the amount of people that reached out to him, not only Republicans and Unaffiliated, but Democrats offering assistance and/or financial assistance to replace the sign. Nunes believes there is good

spirit that definitely still dwells in the Community.

**Joel D'Angelo -**

- D'Angelo stated that it is very clear that many residents were harmed, hurt and saddened about what happened in the Community. D'Angelo expressed his deep sadness that the hurtful and harmful symbol of a swastika was written on a sign, and people had to wake up and witness that as well as drive by it. D'Angelo is deeply sorry on behalf of himself and on behalf of the Town that the Community had to experience that. D'Angelo agrees with Selectman Nunes that the spirit of the people of the Town will shine through the hate symbol. D'Angelo knows the people in the Community and stated regardless of their political party and their political affiliations, he considers everyone his friends and family. D'Angelo truly believes the good spirit will shine through from whatever symbol has been erased by now.

**First Selectman's Comments:**

**Eric Couture -**

- Couture commented about how what transpired last Wednesday and last night in the Town is unacceptable and how there is no reason for anyone to engage in vandalism to anyone's personal property especially when that person is expressing their first amendment right, further choosing a symbol that caused so much hurt and death is unspeakable. Couture advised that Trooper Mulhall is investigating the matter and the case is ongoing. They are hopeful to find the individual(s) who did this. Couture apologized to the Community about his communication of the case being ongoing, noting he did not want to point fingers at anyone directly or cause more tension. Couture further explained he thinks it's important to realize what hate and division bring us noting when people's worst demons come out, is when people lose their democracy. Couture also stated that people may disagree on politics or policy but they can do that without using hate and without attacking others.

Couture hopes that the Town can move forward and hopes that the sign stays up. Couture is meeting with the property owner on Wednesday to start an open dialog with him not only about what happened but regarding his location. He will continue to work to make sure Killingworth remains a safe Community. Couture apologized to the Community members who viewed the symbol longer than they should have but due to the Town they live in, and the legal responsibilities everyone has, it was a more complex situation.

- Couture reminded the Community that we haven't had much rain recently and asked residents not to start fires in their backyards for the sake of the Town's Firefighters. Couture also stated how Flags were flying half-mast for one Firefighter who just recently lost his life fighting wildfires in Berlin, CT so anything the Community can do to keep safe especially since Killingworth is very wooded making it extremely dangerous with no

rainfall.

- Couture commented how the Town is only 19 months away from the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Couture stated that the Killingworth Historical Society asked if they could be their liaison and organizing group, partnering with their sister organization in Clinton to handle festivities. Couture thinks this is a great suggestion given all the good work they do in the Community. Couture will add it on the Agenda for the next Board of Selectmen's meeting.

**Adjournment:** First Selectman Couture *Moved* to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Sciascia  
Clerk