Town of Plymouth

Public Works Board

80 Main Street
Terryville, Connecticut 06786

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MINUTES
Special Meeting
September 29, 2026
Assembly Room

1. Call Meeting To Order
The meeting was called to order.

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2. Roll Call
Present: Chairman Nate Brown. George Castle, Peter Gianesini, Mark Lewandoski, TJ Zagurski (Town Council), and Vicky Carey (Board of Finance)

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3. Fire Exit Notification
Fire exit instructions were provided by the Chairman.

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4. Pledge Of Allegiance
The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Chairman.

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5. Acceptance Of Minutes Previous Meetings
The minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 25, 2026 were presented for approval.
Motion to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2026 Regular Meeting was made by Joe Carey and seconded by Peter Gianesni. The motion carried unanimously.

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6. Monthly Reports
Storm Damage and Emergency Response
Highway Superintendent Aaron Heller reported that on September 17th, highway personnel responded to a downed tree at 283 East Plymouth — a 36-inch diameter tree on the residence property — and completed cleanup. On September 26th and 27th, crews responded to multiple incidents of trees down in the roadway following a storm that past weekend. Sup't Aaron Heller noted that Plymouth experienced minimal storm damage compared to neighboring towns such as Morris, Litchfield, and Harwinton.
Road Signs and Traffic Safety
Several road and stop signs were reported stolen on September 5th, 7th, and 10th. Highway personnel addressed the affected locations and coordinated replacement of signage. The total cost of stolen signs and hardware was summarized in the back of the report packet. Member Joseph Carey raised the issue of the approximately $3,000 cost and asked whether this level of sign theft was a new occurrence. Sup't Aaron Heller explained that while theft — particularly at South Main St. and Old Waterbury Road around the Labor Day period — has happened in the past, this year was excessive. He further noted that in the days preceding the meeting, signs were also being deliberately run over. He confirmed he had reached out to scrap yards in Watertown and Waterbury to check if stolen signs were being sold for scrap, though he believed the theft was likely not scrap-motivated. Temporary rubber stop signs

were also taken. The town's insurance deductible is $5,000, making a claim impractical. Video surveillance from Greystone Rd and Greystone Rd Extension was too blurry for identification. Going forward, Sup't Aaron Heller indicated the department is looking into GPS camera systems at high-risk locations and exploring sign-etching or marking to assist in identification and recovery.

Drainage and Catch Basin Repairs

New catch basin tops were installed on Fountainhead Road and Oakdale Rd, -completed September 4th. Catch basin repairs were also completed on Swicklas Court on September 22nd and on Harwinton Avenue on September 23rd.

Road Maintenance and Material Processing

Hot patching operations continued as personnel and road conditions permitted. Highway personnel continued to screen and process material at the town pit — including topsoil and reclaimed millings — for use on current and upcoming road projects. Approximately 1,400 linear feet of Wolcott Road received a rubber chip seal treatment, completed August 31st.

Equipment Repairs and Maintenance

Sup't Aaron Heller reported that the street sweeper has been on lockout/tagout for electrical repairs since September 11th. The issue involves a voltage drop of 4–5 volts to one of the rear broom air actuators, and the assistant mechanic has been tracing wire harnesses to identify the fault.

The over-the-fence mower has also been on lockout/tagout since September 16th due to hydraulic leaks and pins that had fallen out of the mower head. Sup't Aaron Heller reiterated his previously stated concern that the mower assembly is beyond its serviceable life. He explained that the tractor itself is in good working condition following a prior transmission rebuild, but the mower assembly has required extensive patch welding and is not expected to last much longer. The department plans to request capital funds for a replacement mower assembly, estimated at approximately $90,000, which would be fitted to the existing tractor. Replacing the entire unit would cost north of $300,000.

Salt Inventory

A new account was established with Morton Salt. An order of 816 tons was placed on August 27th, with deliveries received between September 4th and 8th, yielding a final delivered quantity of 813.6 tons. Combined with existing inventory, the salt building now holds approximately 1,300–1,400 tons — exceeding the previously understood capacity of 1,200 tons, achieved through more efficient stacking by Sup't Aaron Heller and staff. The current price is $101.36 per ton, a slight increase over the prior year. Average annual usage over the past five years has been approximately 2,000–2,100 tons.

Joe Carey emphasized the strategic advantage of maximizing on-hand stockpile, noting that in high-demand winters the town would not be competing with the state and other municipalities for limited supply. Sup't Aaron Heller described a plan to fabricate a pusher attachment from a retired tailgate and mount it on the existing jib loader to push salt higher toward the center of the building, potentially adding several hundred more tons of storage capacity using existing on-site equipment.

Ongoing Road Projects

Sup't Aaron Heller reported that North Street and South Eagle are complete and ready for chip seal sweeping and final paving. The Farms Project road grading was completed September 24th, with binder course paving beginning that same morning (September 29th) and scheduled to continue the

following day. The plan is to complete binder paving at the Farms, then move to Mud Street, and return to finish the Farms project, with a second paving crew now active.
George Castle mentioned concerns regarding the driveway into Terryville High School and its need for repaving. There is a need to clarify who is responsible for this repair, request will need to be made.

Public Works – Director's Report-
Director Joe Sopczneski presents the monthly report , covering the following areas:

Interdepartmental Facility Policy
Director Joe Sopczneski reported that an initial meeting was held with the fire department to begin developing an interdepartmental facility use and maintenance policy. The goal is to clearly define in writing which maintenance responsibilities fall under each department's budget versus the public works facilities budget, ensuring each department is properly funded. He indicated the process would continue with other departments.
Truck Route and Traffic Safety Proposal
The truck route and traffic safety proposal was accepted by the Local Traffic Authority. As a first step, an additional stop sign and speed sign will be installed on Preston Road while the remainder of the plan is further developed.
Budget Outline for Fiscal Year 2028
Director Joe Sopczneski presented a preliminary budget framework organized by sub-department.
Public Works Director: A new position of Public Works Project Manager was proposed — someone with a construction engineering and project management background who could handle grant administration, project tracking, and cost oversight. A dedicated engineering budget was also proposed to support project development, including right-of-way review and drainage assessment for efforts such as Prospect Street sidewalk replacement.
Highway Department: Director Joe Sopczneski noted the need to update the budget to reflect the current pay structure and to correctly reallocate transfer station employee salaries, which have historically been carried under the highway department budget but should be moved to the appropriate cost center.
OSHA Compliance Program: The compliance portal implemented in the prior fiscal year has been effective. Director Joe Sopczneski indicated he would review the vendor maintenance cost now that the program is in place, as many tasks can now be handled internally.
Snow Removal: The board was asked to develop a formal policy position on sidewalk clearing — specifically whether the town will continue its practice of maintaining certain sidewalk sections or enforce the ordinance placing responsibility on residents. Director Joe Sopczneski noted the town does not currently have adequate equipment to plow sidewalks at the scale maintained.
Fleet Management: Director Joe Sopczneski described an effort to compile a comprehensive document of the entire town fleet to clarify what is being maintained across departments. Joe Carey requested a breakdown of repair costs by department. Director Joe Sopczneski confirmed this was underway. The discussion touched on tire procurement, confirming that tires are purchased through the state contract to obtain the best pricing. The $25,000 threshold change for capital vs. operating expenditures was noted as requiring budget updates.

Utilities: The streetlight maintenance program — including pole and luminaire replacements — was identified as a recurring topic that needs to be resolved between capital and operating budgets. Several wooden streetlight poles in the Farms neighborhood and other areas built 30–40 years ago are deteriorating. Director Joe Sopczneski noted aluminum pole lead times of up to 18 months, and that composite or fiberglass alternatives previously explored by the department may offer better durability. Members recalled a prior initiative under which composite poles were purchased and proved cost-effective.

Capital Program Overview

Director Joe Sopczneski presented highlights of anticipated capital requests for FY28.

Pipeline Engineering: He emphasized that most available grant programs require projects to be approximately 25% engineered to be considered "shovel ready." He proposed a dedicated engineering budget to develop this project pipeline. Joe Carey strongly agreed, expressing the view that the town has historically underperformed in grant pursuit and that this investment is a necessary prerequisite.

Vicky Carey (Board of Finance) clarified the context for the capital threshold change from $5,000 to $25,000, citing inflation, and confirmed the mayor wants budget submissions completed by December.

Highway Fleet and Equipment: Capital items include an updated truck fleet lease program to replace frontline trucks, a replacement roadside mower assembly, and a new woodchipper.

Transfer Station: Continued progress on the compactor trailer upgrade program was noted, with the existing trailer setup now in routine use.

Facilities: Building assessments and major upgrades across town facilities were flagged as needed capital investments.

Paving Program and Road Bond Update

The near-term paving sequence was outlined: complete binder at Farms, finish North Street, and then return to Farms for the final surface. The Todd Bridge bid package is ready from the engineering consultant and is awaiting a front-page advertisement to go out to bid.

The five-year road bond program's next phase will focus on completing Chipseal Phase 2, including North Harwinton Ave from Preston Road to the town border (mill and pave) and approximately 1,500 feet of Preston Road near Route 72 (mill and pave), with the highway crew handling catch basin repairs, pipe work, and shimming in the interim. Carriage Road, Burnham St, and School Street neighborhood, and Greystone Rd extension were among the roads identified as upcoming projects within the bond program.

Regarding the South Main Street Bridge, Director Joe Sopczneski reported attending a meeting with WMC, DOT, DEEP, and State Fisheries to review the design. Additional information was requested by the agencies, and the project continues to move forward. He also clarified that the previously circulated cost estimate of $3,000,000 for the bridge appears to have been significantly overstated; the current cost estimate is approximately $1.65 million, with a 50% local match of approximately $825,000 from bond funds and $825,000 from the Local Bridge Program. This outcome frees up additional funds from the $6,000,000 bond allocation to address other roads in the program.

Joe Carey raised whether the board should consider engaging a single contractor capable of performing both milling and paving, noting that in recent seasons there have been lengthy delays between the two operations due to separate contractor schedules. Director Joe Sopczneski and the board agreed this warranted serious consideration going forward, including evaluating bid structures by linear footage or lane miles.

Joe Carey also inquired about the South Main Street Bridge's preliminary cost estimate being roughly double the current figure. Director Joe Sopczneski acknowledged the discrepancy and indicated the number had simply been carried forward from earlier planning documents.
The ongoing Tory Crossing DOT application was accepted and assigned project number L110004 with a dedicated project engineer. Feedback is expected within 6–8 weeks of the September 15th submission date.

Public Comment on Paving Quality

Councilman TJ Zagurski raised concerns about pavement quality on Crestview Road, stating that seams are already failing on pavement laid the prior year. He suggested the town consider pursuing the contractor for workmanship issues and advocated strongly for finding a paving contractor that can provide a more complete, accountable service. He also commented on the North Street school situation — where paving stopped approximately 20 feet short of the driveway for roughly a week — expressing frustration that it should have been completed the following morning. Director Joe Sopczneski explained the stoppage was caused by a major traffic accident that shut down asphalt production and resulted in the loss of a full truckload of material, which was beyond the department's control. The board acknowledged both concerns and agreed the paving contractor relationship and quality standards deserve further review.

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7. Public Comment

Melaine Church, 328 Main Street addressed the board with two items. First, she noted that matters such as the sidewalk clearing policy and capital procurement thresholds are governed by the town charter, and any changes to those policies would require a formal charter amendment process. She also recalled a historical instance in which grant funds designated for a specific road project were redirected, and urged the board to establish safeguards to prevent designated project funds from being diverted.

Director Joe Sopczneski clarified that the procurement process would continue to be followed regardless of whether a purchase falls under capital or operating budgets; the threshold change only affects how items are categorized for budget purposes.
Ms. Vicky Carey (Board of Finance) clarified that the capital threshold increase from $5,000 to $25,000 was driven by inflation, with the intent that small-dollar items no longer burden the capital program unnecessarily. She also confirmed that traffic sign budgets fall under the Highway Department, not the Police Department.

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8. Executive Session – Personnel Matters – If Needed

Executive Session was not convened.

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9. Administrative
No administrative items were discussed.

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10. Chairman's Report
The Chairman had no report.

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11. Commission Member Comments
Joe Carey commended the format of the monthly reports for providing continuity from meeting to meeting, describing it as coherent and effective. No other commission member comments were offered.

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12. Old Business
Joe Carey noted that items he had planned to raise under Old Business had already been addressed during the monthly reports. No additional old business was brought forward.

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13. New Business
No new business was presented.

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14. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn was made by George Castle and seconded by Mark Lewandoski. The motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by,

Pamela Pelletier
Recording Secretary