



TOWN OF KENSINGTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

Kensington Town Hall
95 Amesbury Road
Kensington, NH 03833

Monday September 14, 2026

Meeting Minutes / Draft

PUBLIC SESSION

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:37pm and led all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present : Sara Hamilton (Chair), Tom Balabon (Member), Ian O'Reilly (Member)

Dept Heads & Town Staff – Chief Scott Cain (PD), Chief Jeff DiBartolomeo (FD), Gino Rignoli (Bldg Dept), Matt Armstrong (Road Dept), Carlene Wiggin (Tax Dept), Kathleen T Felch (Town Administrator), Peter Gaffney (Land Use Administrator).

Public in attendance was approximately 40.

1. Change to Agenda

- The Chair announced that the public comment portion would be moved to later in the agenda.
- The Board began with a scheduled informational discussion regarding groundwater contamination concerns associated with the Unitil property and ongoing monitoring activities.
- The Chair stated that the session was intended as a public question-and-answer opportunity for residents, particularly those owning property adjacent to the Unitil site, to receive information from representatives of Unitil, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), and the project's environmental consultants

2. Unitil/NHDES Contamination Q&A Session

- **Panel Introductions** - Representative Susan Porcelli welcomed attendees and thanked the Board, town staff, and participating agencies for their attendance. She introduced the panel:
 - o Scott Drew, Hazardous Waste Remediation Bureau Project Manager, NHDES
 - o Cheryl Brown, Oil Remediation Compliance Bureau Project Manager, NHDES
 - o Michael Kanarik, Senior Project Manager, GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc.
 - o Tom Murphy, Manager of Environmental Health and Safety, Unitil
 - o Alek O'Mara, Director of External Affairs, Unitil
 - o David Beaulieu, Business Development Executive, Unitil

- **NHDES Site Overview** - Scott Drew provided an overview of the Unitil property located at 114 Drinkwater Road. He explained that:
 - Petroleum contamination associated with a leaking underground storage tank was first identified in the early-to-mid 1990s.
 - Additional contaminants were identified during investigations beginning in 2019-2020.
 - Contaminants identified include:
 - PFAS compounds
 - Arsenic
 - Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)
 - Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)
 - Pentachlorophenol (PCP)
- Discovery of PFAS in a public water supply well triggered expanded groundwater and drinking water investigations.
- Additional soil and groundwater assessments conducted around 2021 identified other contaminants associated with historical utility operations, including utility pole storage and transformer storage activities.
- Ongoing investigations are being conducted under New Hampshire contaminated site regulations.
- Additional groundwater monitoring and private well sampling continue both on-site and at nearby residential properties.
- Mr. Drew emphasized that NHDES staff present were geologists and hydrogeologists and were not qualified to provide medical or health-effect opinions. Residents with health-related questions were directed to NHDES Environmental Health Program professionals.
- **Petroleum Remediation Status** - Cheryl Brown reported that:
 - Petroleum contamination remains under active monitoring.
 - The petroleum plume has been delineated.
 - Monitoring occurs under a five-year permit framework.
 - Current data indicate that petroleum contamination is not migrating off-site.
- **Future Remediation Planning** - Michael Kanarek of GZA GeoEnvironmental explained that:
 - Current investigative work will eventually support development of a Remedial Action Plan (RAP).
 - The anticipated objective is removal of source materials responsible for contamination.
 - Long-term groundwater monitoring would continue after source removal.
 - A Certificate of Completion could eventually be sought from NHDES once groundwater standards are met

- **Public Questions and Discussion**

- Jim Varn, 106 Drinkwater Road, asked whether a jointly owned fire pond located downhill from the Unitil property was being monitored.
- Panel members responded that:

- o Surface water samples from the pond had not been collected.
 - o Existing hydrogeologic evaluations indicate a natural barrier between the identified PFAS source area and the pond.
 - o The pond is not currently part of the PFAS sampling program.
- o Kate Carey, 8 Oak Ridge Road, asked whether all contaminants identified during investigations were included in current testing programs.
- o The panel stated that:
 - o Current supplemental site investigations include testing for all identified contaminants of concern.
 - o Investigation boundaries have been expanded to better define sources and contaminant migration pathways.
 - o PFAS monitoring extends beyond the property boundary to residential abutters.
 - o The investigation remains focused on fully characterizing contamination before active remediation begins.
- o Bob Hall, 101 Drinkwater Road, expressed concern regarding notification of contamination discoveries and questioned who had been informed of the findings.
- o Panel members explained:
 - o Exceedances of groundwater quality standards are reported directly to NHDES.
 - o State law requires notification of properties with drinking water wells located within 500 feet of identified exceedances of detected soil contaminants.
 - o Notification letters were mailed to qualifying property owners.
 - o Site investigation reports are publicly available through NHDES records.
- o Mr. Hall expressed concern that broader property owner notification had not occurred earlier. Unitil representatives replied that notification requirements had been followed according to state law and applicable regulations.
- o Susan Varn, 106 Drinkwater Road, asked why the number of homes included in the sampling program had increased.
- o The panel reported that:
 - o Initial sampling focused on immediate abutters and properties within the regulatory notification radius.
 - o Later efforts expanded outreach and sampling participation.
 - o Approximately 16 of 21-22 invited households participated in the latest round of testing.
 - o Sampling expansion reflects efforts to improve coverage and participation rates rather than discovery of new contamination patterns.
- o A resident requested clearer copies of previous sampling maps and testing information.
- o Unitil representatives agreed to investigate posting information online and reminded residents that records remain publicly available through the NHDES online system.
- o Panel members stated that:

- o Most of the off-site PFAS test results have remained below state groundwater standards.
- o One location experienced an exceedance, but subsequent sampling reportedly showed declining concentrations below regulatory standards.
- o A resident requested estimated timelines for cleanup activities.
- o Unitil representatives stated:
 - o Supplemental site investigations are expected to be submitted by the first quarter of 2027.
 - o Following NHDES review and approval, remediation planning would proceed.
 - o Physical soil removal could potentially begin during 2028.
 - o Soil excavation activities are expected to require approximately two to four weeks.
 - o Estimated soil removal volumes range from approximately 800 to 1,500 cubic yards.
- o A resident requested information about likely contamination sources. [
- o Unitil representatives stated:
 - o Utility industry operations do not typically use PFAS directly.
 - o Potential PFAS sources could include laundering of flame-resistant clothing over many years.
 - o PCBs may be associated with historical electrical equipment.
 - o PCP contamination may be associated with utility pole storage practices.
 - o Arsenic may be naturally occurring or potentially associated with historical wood treatment activities.
- o Jim Varn, 106 Drinkwater Road asked whether development of a proposed municipal well in neighboring Exeter could alter groundwater flow and affect contaminant migration.
- o Unitil representatives responded that:
 - o Previous discussions occurred between project representatives and Unitil.
 - o Available evaluations suggested the Unitil contamination area falls outside the projected zone of significant influence.
 - o No additional information had been requested from Unitil by the Exeter project team.
- o A resident asked whether specific laboratories were recommended for private well testing.
- o NHDES representatives advised residents to consult the NHDES PFAS web resources, which contain guidance and laboratory information for private sampling and analysis.

- **Closing Remarks**

- o Representative Susan Porcelli thanked residents, panelists, Unitil representatives, NHDES staff, and Board members for participating. She stated that efforts would be made to consolidate contact information and resource materials for public access.

Meeting in RECESS at 07:10pm

3. Call to Order

- The Chair called the meeting to order at 07:20pm and opened the floor for public comment.

4. Public Comment

- A resident raised concerns regarding the Board's recent notice concerning designation of the library as government use. The resident questioned the legal interpretation of RSA 202-A:3 and argued that a public library must be established or accepted by town vote before being considered a governmental entity. The resident expressed concern that such a designation could exempt the library from local approval processes and zoning oversight, including setbacks and site modifications. The resident further indicated that additional provisions of RSA 202 may require broader public representation and requested further review by the Town. The resident stated an intention to provide written legal analysis to the Board.
- The Chair explained that the Board relied upon legal counsel's interpretation and acknowledged receipt of the resident's concerns. The Board clarified that:
 - o No final determination has been made.
 - o The Planning Board previously requested clarification regarding governmental-use status.
 - o Legal counsel advised that publicly elected library trustees may qualify as the governmental entity capable of submitting an application.
 - o Discussions remain ongoing, and no application has yet been approved.
 - o Any future proceedings would be publicly noticed.
- Another resident requested clarification regarding what action the Board had voted upon concerning the library matter.
- The Board explained that it voted to acknowledge and support legal counsel's opinion that a library may constitute a governmental-use entity and that the Select Board itself could not submit an application because the Town is not providing project funding. The Board further stated that publicly elected library trustees could potentially submit such an application.
- A resident suggested that elected officials consider recusal in situations where they are actively fundraising or otherwise directly involved with entities seeking Board action, emphasizing public trust and transparency.
- The Board noted that recusal practices are already utilized by members of various legislative bodies within the Town when appropriate.

End of Public Comment

5. Department Heads Reports

Police Department – Chief Scott Cain

- Participation in a meeting with Homeland Security regarding emergency operations planning related to Seabrook Station.
- Joint training opportunities for police and fire personnel focusing on radiation monitoring and response.

- Scheduled training on December 3 for personnel certification related to radiation measurement.
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Fire Department – Chief Jeff DiBartolomeo

- The Fire Chief reported successful participation in Old Home Day festivities, generating positive community engagement.
 - Coordination with Homeland Security is set for December training exercises.
 - Establishment of a new warming and cooling center at Kensington Community Church for emergency public use during extreme temperatures has been setup.
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Road Agent Report – Matt Armstrong

- The Road Agent reported the completion of 2026 road reconstruction work by Bell & Flynn.
 - The total reconstruction expenditures of \$220,020.49, approximately \$1,600 below the contractor's bid.
 - The remaining 2026 road reconstruction funds of \$26,621.62 available for carryover into 2027.
 - We are in receipt of an initial road salt quote from Eastern Minerals of \$77.77 per ton for 2026/2027 season.
 - It is anticipated that the seasonal purchase of approximately 320 tons of salt will be required.
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Tax Collector Carlene Wiggin

- The Tax Collector reported she will be in attendance at the annual Tax Collectors Conference in North Conway later this week and advised that office operations would continue under staff coverage during her absence.
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Building Inspector

- No issues to discuss.
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6. New Business

A. Special Events Permit

- The Board reviewed an open air assembly permit and a special alcohol permit for a wedding to be held September 26, 2026, at 32 Moulton Ridge Road. Discussion included parking arrangements, expected attendance, and police details.

MOTION: *To approve an Open Air Assembly for Beverly DeBoisbriand at 32 Moulton Ridge Rd on September 26, 2026*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

MOTION: *To approve an Special Alcohol Permit for Beverly DeBoisbriand at 32 Moulton Ridge Rd on September 26, 2026*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

B. Tax Abatement

- The Tax Collector advised the Board that various abatement requests had been reviewed.
- All requests were denied except one matter that had previously gone to settlement and was therefore approved by default.
- One application involved inability-to-pay considerations; the applicant would be provided information regarding available tax relief programs.
- No decision constitutes Board denial. No motions were made. All abatements were considered denied.

C. Solar Exemption Ownership Transfer

- The Board reviewed a solar energy exemption application requiring reapproval due solely to a change in property ownership for property located at 244 Amesbury Road. No changes to the exemption itself were

MOTION: *To approve Solar Exemption due to ownership change for Map 03 Lot 26.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

D. Eversource Tax Payment Proposal

- The Tax Collector presented a request from Eversource to transition municipal tax payments to Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Eversource will no longer be issuing checks for tax payments per their letter.
- Concerns were discussed regarding disclosure of Town banking information and implications for municipal financial security. The Board agreed additional information should be gathered through statewide tax collector discussions before any determination is made. No formal action was taken.
- Many towns have issues with giving out town ACH information.

E. Conservation Commission Appointments

Motion: *To appoint Emily Lafferty to the Conservation Commission as a full member of with a term expiring April 2029.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

Motion: *To appoint Susan Hatch to the Conservation Commission as a full member of with a term expiring April 2028.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

Motion: *To appoint Martin Choquette to the Conservation Commission as a full member of with a term expiring April 2027.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

F. Pothole Damage Claim

- The Board reviewed a citizen request for reimbursement for vehicle damage allegedly caused by a pothole on Wild Pasture Road. The discussion focused on RSA 231:92, which requires municipal notice of a roadway defect before liability may attach. Road Manager reported that notification was received after the alleged incident occurred and pot hole was filled around the time of the reported incident.

Motion: *To deny the reimbursement request pursuant to RSA 231:92.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

G. Cemetery Trustees Reimbursement Request

- The Board reviewed a request from the Cemetery Trustees for reimbursement through the Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund for costs associated with removal and disposal of a storm-damaged shed.

Motion: *To approve the Cemetery Trustee request for reimbursement from the Kensington Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund for \$350.80 for disposal costs related to the tree damaged shed.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

H. Police Department Building Maintenance

- The Board discussed a deteriorating Police Department exterior door that no longer consistently latches and poses a security concern. Estimated repair costs were approximately \$1,400. Additional discussion included other maintenance issues involving building lighting and historical-building considerations.

- The Board authorized proceeding with repairs and agreed the expense should be tracked through the government buildings line item rather than police equipment budgets.

I. ALS (Ambulance) Service Review Discussion

- Board members discussed a recent regional ALS meeting presentation and reviewed:
 - Cost structures.
 - Readiness fees.
 - Call volume data.
 - Tax rate implications.
 - Future service options.
- The Fire Chief reported that regional ALS providers were dispatched 51 times to Kensington in 2025 and arrived on scene 33 times. Discussion emphasized balancing costs with public safety needs and exploring additional public informational presentations.

- Approval of Prior Minutes

Motion: *To approve meeting minutes for July 27, 2026 and meeting minutes for August 10, 2026.*

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

- Bills and payroll signed.
- Next Board Meetings at 6:30pm
 - October 05, 2026

6. Adjournment

MOTION: to adjourn the meeting was made at 8:20pm

Motioned by: Ian O'Reilly

Seconded by: Tom Balabon

Vote: Passed all in favor (unanimous)

*Submitted by:
Peter Gaffney
Land Use Administrator*

NHDES Attachment below

NHDES contact information for the Unil Energy Systems site at 114 Drinkwater Road, Kensington

Questions about the PFAS, PCBs, PCP, and arsenic contamination:
Scott Drew, P.G., Scott.T.Drew@des.nh.gov; (603) 271-1358

Questions about the petroleum-related contamination: Cheryl Brown, P.G., Cheryl.A.Brown@des.nh.gov; (603) 271-2490

Health related questions: NHDES Environmental Health Program, Karen Craver, MPH, Karen.M.Craver@des.nh.gov; or (603) 271-6802 (Kathryn Abdelwahid)

