TOWN OF BEDFORD
FACILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
July 30, 2026
10 Meetinghouse Road

1. ROLL CALL: A meeting of the Bedford Facilities Committee was held on Thursday, July 30, 2026, 10 Meetinghouse Road. Participating were Town Councilors Phil Greazzo, Gail Levesque, John Bator, and resident members Tom Lianza, and Ray Pieczarka. Also present was Town Manager Rick Sawyer, Fire Chief Frank Fraitzl, Becky Soule, and Jeanne Walker, Assistant Town Manager. Committee members Chris Petzke, Dave Gilbert, and Chris Swiniarski were absent.

The meeting began at 6:30 PM.

Councilor Levesque stated that the proceedings would be kept informal because a couple of team members were unable to attend. She didn't want to get deeply into discussions or decision-making without the full team present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Led by Councilor Bator.

Councilor Levesque stated that the proceedings would be kept informal because a couple of team members were unable to attend. She didn't want to get deeply into discussions or decision-making without the full team present.

3. ELECT CHAIR/VICE CHAIR

> **MOTION by Councilor Greazzo to nominate Gail Levesque as Chair, and to nominate John Bator as Vice Chair. Second by Ray Pieczarka. Vote taken. Motion Passes – 5-0.**

4. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

5. DISCUSS OBJECTIVE AND MISSION OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE SET GOALS

Chair Levesque suggested they spend time discussing its mission and purpose. They likely had questions regarding the scope, boundaries, and rules going forward. A survey conducted in March identified four primary facilities: Fire Department, Police Department, Department of Public Works (DPW), including the administrative offices located at 55 Constitution Drive, and potentially the Highway garage, and Town Office. There had been significant discussion regarding the work and space needs of those departments, which would provide them with plenty of work to do. She asked if everyone agreed that those facilities should form the scope and boundaries of their discussion and mission. The Committee agreed.

Chair Levesque stated that in future meetings they would delve into cost estimates, timelines, and project prioritization. She emphasized the critical need to understand the tax impact of any proposals since 25% of respondents to a recent survey indicated they did not want their taxes raised, regardless of what the Town decided to do, making it imperative for the Committee to be as cost-effective as possible. They have an opportunity to manage the tax impact by leveraging road bonds that are scheduled to be paid off this year and in two years.

Chair Levesque stated that they would eventually prepare warrant articles, but clarified that it was unrealistic to expect a warrant article for any new building facility by March. Sites still needed to be identified and prepared. Some form of warrant article might be proposed sooner, but targeting March was an overly ambitious goal. A warrant article would need to be finalized by the end of October. Obtaining comprehensive price estimates and designs by October was unrealistic.

6. NEAR TERM GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

Chair Levesque stated that she reviewed the Town website, mostly the Town Manager's page, to identify historical and contextual documents and she put them on USB flash drives for the members as homework, which would allow them to share a common language and reference historical context moving forward. She detailed the contents provided on the drives, which included the video and minutes of the previous committee's first meeting, minutes extending through the fall prior to the last warrant article, and an estimate for the last fire station proposal, which was in the ballpark of $8.9M. The drives also contained documents outlining the space needs for the Fire Department and Police Department, but DPW and Highway garage documents were not included yet. They would be discussed at a meeting when Brian Desfosses was present.

Mr. Sawyer explained how to locate facilities information on the Town website. It hadn't been updated since the March 2025 vote for the fire substation, but it would be updated to serve as a repository for the new committee's documents. He detailed the contents of the page, pointing out the fire substation video, design plans, cost estimates, and comparisons of the two buildings proposed at 300 South River Road. He highlighted the larger 2024 proposal for a combined police station and fire substation at 300 South River Road. He strongly encouraged members to watch the seven videos created by the Facilities Communication Committee, noting that they featured presentations by Bedford residents, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Assistant Town Manager.

Chair Levesque stated that she included the first video on the memory stick. Mr. Sawyer urged the Committee to watch that specific video. He directed them to the bottom of the webpage to the Harriman Study. It represented the beginning of facility evaluations in the past decade. He offered to present the broader 30-year history of efforts to achieve a new fire station and facility upgrades at the next meeting. Chair Levesque noted that the first two volumes of the study were extensive, with at least one volume totaling around 400 pages, and suggested that Mr. Sawyer's presentation would be a helpful alternative to reading the entire document.

Mr. Sawyer advised the Committee to review the space needs and concepts in the second volume, which demonstrated the extensive work done in 2017 and 2018 to find a solution. He stated that the space needs assessments remained consistent and on point for the various departments. He clarified that while the needs had been updated for the Police and Fire departments, they had not been extensively updated for other departments since 2018, aside from minor updates for Planning and Public Works. The webpage contains facilities work in 2025 (top), 2024 (middle) and the 2017-2019 Harriman Study (bottom).

7. DISCUSS NEED FOR TOUR OF SPECIFIC FACILITIES

Chair Levesque suggested that the next logical step for the committee would be to tour the Fire station, Police station, Town Office, and Public Works facilities. Seeing those early in the process would provide a visual frame of reference for future conversations She inquired about scheduling a tour of the Fire Department. Chief Fraitzl offered to conduct tours either for the group or for members individually. They Committee discussed availability and tour times.

Chair Levesque suggested opening the tour to the rest of the Town Council, pointing out that budget season was approaching and some Councilors hadn't toured the buildings. She would reach out to Chief Fraitzl to schedule the Fire Department tour and proposed doing the same for the Police Department. Deputy Chief Monahan and Chief Fraitzl estimated each tour would take about a half hour. Chair Levesque suggested scheduling the Police and Fire tours on the same day. She also recommended allocating time afterward in the conference room to meet with the Chiefs allowing the committee to ask questions and confirm their observations while on site.

Chair Levesque stated that they would reach out to schedule tours of DPW and Highway garage with Brian. She asked Mr. Sawyer if he would conduct the tour of the Town Office. Mr. Sawyer stated that they would gladly coordinate the tours and the necessary public postings. He emphasized that if the full Town Council and the committee were invited, the tours must be formally posted and advertised as a meeting. Chair Levesque agreed to work with Mr. Sawyer and Ms. Walker to communicate with the Department Heads and finalize the schedule.

Chair Levesque proposed visiting police and fire facilities outside of Bedford. Touring the Bedford facilities would highlight current space needs and operational concerns. Visiting more recently built facilities in other towns would provide a visual reference for what Bedford is trying to achieve with its own updates. She asked Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Walker to assist in coordinating those tours.

Mr. Sawyer recommended that they visit a new police station currently under construction in Salem. Salem had been trying to build a station for over a decade and was ultimately successful in the last couple of years by utilizing a different approach than Bedford had previously tried.

8. DISCUSS VALUE AND TIMING OF HIRING A CONTRACTOR TO WORK WITH THE COMMITTEE

Chair Levesque asked about the different models. Mr. Sawyer stated first, the traditional architect model used in the previous Harriman studies, where an architect is hired to determine space needs, develop a plan, bid it out, and build it. Second, the construction manager program used previously when the Town hired Fulcrum Associates to be the construction managers and bring on an architectural team. Third, the owner's representative model recently used by Salem, where the representative brings in consultants, performs the legwork, and helps the committee pull plans together to move forward. Chair Levesque asked if the owner's representative model was economical. Mr. Sawyer stated that it was for Salem and wanted to try it in Bedford, because it doesn’t tie the Town into anything, while providing industry expertise on current trends, accurate cost estimates, and ordering timelines. He had seen a presentation on the Salem project at the NHMA conference the previous fall and thought it was incredible what they achieved for a very limited cost. Chair Levesque highlighted the advantages of the model, noting it provides a neutral party to guide the team with expertise at a reasonable price. Funds were available in the facility CIP budget to execute such a plan. The next steps should be visiting the Salem station, potentially touring other facilities, and arranging a meeting with Salem's owner's representative to evaluate the approach. Mr. Sawyer offered to set up those meetings.

Chair Levesque summarized the near-term goals of completing tours and meeting with outside contacts, including the owner's representative, while also keeping the construction manager model as a potential option to review.

9. REVIEW OPTIONS/RESULTS FROM SURVEY IN MARCH

Mr. Sawyer displayed the results of a survey conducted in March. Chair Levesque clarified that while the survey was not profoundly binding, it was important for understanding residents' perspectives on tax impacts. She emphasized the need to understand the total costs, which facilities would be touched, and how to lay out the expenses similarly to the road bonds to avoid a massive tax hit in a single year. The March survey reached 2,300 participants, which was a significant improvement over a prior survey that only reached about 500 people. She stressed the importance of keeping the Town engaged throughout the journey so that residents understand the value of the final proposal and are willing to support a warrant article rather than being surprised at the end of the process. She pointed out that 75% of respondents did not want to keep putting the project off because they knew it would only get more expensive, while 25% stated they did not want their taxes raised. Their job was to determine the optimal solution that balances the necessary tax increase, acknowledging there is always more than one right answer. They discussed the survey results and the ongoing communication strategy regarding facility upgrades.

10. UPDATE FROM COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE ON PLANS FOR MORE DATA GATHERING, POTENTIALLY ANOTHER SURVEY, AT SEPT/NOV ELECTIONS TO GARNER A MUCH BROADER RESPONSE

Councilor Greazzo suggested the Communications Committee could continue the survey format. If they identified a piece of property and obtained building cost estimates, the Communications Committee could present that information on Election Day to gauge what voters are facing and what they find acceptable. Having more data in September would serve as a great engagement tool to keep the public updated and aware that the project was still moving forward. If they do it properly in September and November would be a good lead-up to a limited warrant article in March. He stated that a November survey would indicate whether a warrant article would pass. Councilor Greazzo agreed, noting that a survey in November would reveal if a warrant article was viable or dead, especially given the baseline of 2,300 previous survey participants. He questioned whether a specific warrant article would be ready for November questions but emphasized that gathering data would inform them ahead of March.

Councilor Soule stated that she had met with Councilor Sullivan twice to discuss the tax impact and the potential direction of the Facilities Committee. They decided to track the Facilities Committee's progress, participate in the upcoming tours, and focus on the tax impact, which she identified as the biggest hurdle. She estimated that $100 million in spending on a AAA bond would result in a 25-30% increase on the Town side. They wanted to provide input and utilize the two fall voting sessions to present information to the public and gather feedback.

11. DISCUSS STRATEGIES TO KEEP FACILITIES COMMITTEE AND COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE ALIGNED TO OPTIMIZE INPUT AND FEEDBACK

Chair Levesque stated that the Communications Committee and the Facilities Committee needed to work in tandem to keep the community engaged and informed about the project's progress. They would need further conversation regarding survey protocols and what is legally allowed. She emphasized the need to aggressively manage the timeline, estimating it would take 3-5 years before a new fire station could be operational. The steps are get the site, do the permits, do the site work, get the design, and build the building. The committee must be aggressive yet prudent in reaching the end goal, and keeping the Communications Committee in lockstep was essential for maintaining lines of communication with the Town. Councilor Greazzo added that the effort was not just a data-gathering expedition but a data-sharing process. He emphasized the importance of communicating the progress made, the goals set, and the items identified to keep the public in the loop and allow them to participate. Ms. Levesque welcomed feedback from the Committee on how to communicate decisions to the Town, including educating the public about space needs and the value of the proposal.

12. NEAR TERM AND LONG TERM FOCUS ITEMS

The Committee's near-term and long-term focus items were conducting tours inside and outside of Bedford, deciding quickly on a model for an outside consultant report, preparing a warrant article for March, or the following March, to align with road bonds coming off.

13. REVIEW MEETING SCHEDULE/CADENCE GOING FORWARD

Chair Levesque suggested meeting on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of every month. The Energy Committee already meets in the same room on the 4th Thursday at 7:00 PM, so the Facilities Committee would need to start early enough to have a hard stop by 6:45 PM.

The Committee discussed times for the 2nd and 4th Thursdays. Chair Levesque confirmed they would start at 5:30 PM.

14. REVIEW PROTOCOL FOR NON-PUBLIC MEETINGS IF/WHEN APPROPRIATE

Chair Levesque noted the non-public meeting item on the agenda, but it would not be needed that night. There would be occasions, such as discussing land transactions, where it would not be appropriate to hold the discussion in a public session. The committee would discuss as much as possible publicly, but when necessary, they would vote to enter a non-public session and return to the public meeting once finished.

15. POTENTIAL SITES

Chair Levesque stated that aside from facility tours, the Committee should actively think about other potential sites for a facility, whether for police, fire, or the Town Office. Land was at a premium in Bedford, but they needed to identify good locations and figure out how to secure property. She referenced the Town survey and previous discussions with Chief Fraitzl noting the possibility of leaving the Police facility where it currently was while establishing an east location and a west location for the Fire Department. They were still looking at the South River corridor, though not necessarily where previous proposals were located, and were also considering the west or northwest areas of Town, specifically mentioning the Route 101 and Wallace Road area.

Mr. Lianza asked if the Town currently owned any land purchased specifically for facilities. Chair Levesque replied that the only land purchased for facilities was 300 South River Road. There had been resistance to the 300 South River Road site for two reasons: it is located at the far edge of Town, and it does not address the needs of the west side of Bedford. Residents on the west side would not support the site if it ended up being the only Fire station. She thought taking tours and understanding space needs would provide a foundation for evaluating options. For the Town Office, the options were to spend a significant amount of money to renovate the current building or find an alternate building. The Public Works administrative offices are currently on the top floor of 55 Constitution. If they were moved to open up space for the Police station, the Committee would need to determine a logical new location for them. She emphasized the need to contain costs and avoid spending $100 million. She pointed out that Mr. Pieczarka was on the last committee and Dave Gilbert, who was absent, had served on the previous committee and would bring valuable history to the discussions.

Mr. Lianza asked if there was a requirement that Town Offices must be located in Town-owned property. Councilor Greazzo stated he didn't think there was such a requirement. Mr. Lianza pointed out that there is a significant amount of open office space in Town, particularly along South River Road, and suggested the Committee look into long-term leases where the landlord handles property maintenance at a fixed cost. IBM had moved out of a building behind the Fire station a couple of years ago, leaving the space open until other high-tech companies moved in, confirming that available commercial space exists. Leasing property works well for many State offices, keeps properties off the tax rolls for the most part, and avoids the need to construct a new facility. He suggested this approach would appease the approximately 25% of the population opposed to new buildings and could be executed quietly without requiring a massive warrant article.

Mr. Lianza referenced Salem, noting that the growth of their performance zone was extremely high and the resulting population density required their fire and police departments to grow to provide safety for the area. Bedford has its own performance zone where apartments are being built, which will eventually hit the tax rolls and generate revenue. 5-year plans must account for this growth, arguing that large-scale residential growth is unlikely due to Bedford's zoning of two to two-and-a-half acres per house, but significant growth will occur in the apartment complexes. This high-density area is where fire and police services are most needed and represents the highest growth of tax income.

Mr. Lianza stressed that the Fire and Police departments have a fiduciary responsibility for public safety, and that funding them is not optional. The public needs to understand why these services are necessary, noting that residents opposed to new buildings generally just do not want to pay more taxes, but taxes could increase even without new construction. The previous warrant article failed, but there is massive build-out in that section of Town, including nursing homes and high ambulance trip volumes. If emergency responders are traveling to that area, they can't simultaneously assist someone on the other side of Town, and this reality needs to be presented to the public. Chair Levesque agreed that the South River Corridor must remain on the table, whether at 300 South River Road or a closer location. She also agreed about leasing office space, stating they would consider it and not rule it out.

Mr. Lianza suggested getting a realtor or someone familiar with the commercial real estate market involved to assist the Committee, provided they were not profiting from finding a lease for the Town. Chair Levesque recommended that they watch a presentation made by the Town Assessor, Doug Irvine, at the July12th Town Council meeting. The presentation detailed the commercial versus residential tax burden, how it plays out in Bedford, and how it has shifted over the years. She didn't agree with everything, but found it very educational.

Chair Levesque expressed a desire to schedule facility tours and begin discussing potential locations and approaches. Could make any assumptions about the Police station staying in its current location in any of the scenarios. This would depend on Committee discussions and feedback from Department Heads.

Chair Levesque proposed scheduling the tours toward the end of August. They could do them at 5:30 PM in lieu of a meeting or earlier in the day. She would check with Council and Mr. Sawyer. Councilor Bator agreed that holding tours in lieu of a meeting sounded like a good idea. Councilor Greazzo wouldn't say in lieu of a meeting and suggested touring the Police and Fire facilities and then convening in the training room to hold a meeting to discuss what they had seen. Chair Levesque agreed that other agenda items could be discussed there. Mr. Lianza raised concerns about public access, and Councilor Greazzo explained that the Town Manager had confirmed it must be noticed as a public meeting. While the tour itself would not be televised, the subsequent discussion and the meeting would be noticed and minutes would be taken for any pertinent discussion.

16. REVIEW MEETING SCHEDULE/CADENCE GOING FORWARD

Chair Levesque that they had a meeting scheduled for August 13th and August 20th. She suggested moving those start times to 5:30 PM. For September, meetings were scheduled for

September 10th and September 24th. She didn't schedule anything beyond that, but proposed sticking with the 2nd and 4th Thursdays going forward and moving the start time to 5:30 PM for all meetings. She would work with Mr. Sawyer and Jeanne to schedule the tours, aiming to have the dates finalized by August 13th so they could be communicated to the group and the Town Council.

Chair Levesque noted that the meeting minutes would be sent to Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Petzke, and Mr. Swiniarski to verify the start dates and times. She asked the committee to start thinking about where they aim to be by this coming March and the following March, stating that they need to have a finalized plan ready to go by the following March. She added that she would work with Councilor Soule and her team to ensure they are communicating with the general public.

17. ADJOURN

> **MOTION by Phil Greazzo to adjourn. Seconded by Tom Lianza. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 5-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Boufford