

# Jamaica Selectboard Minutes

Jamaica Town Office

Monday, April 27, 2026 – 7:00 PM

**Board Members Present:** Jessica Pollack, Greg Meuelemans, Robert Brooks, Jason Kass

**Public Present:** Paul Fraser, Drew Hazelton, Adam Goudreau, Bob Stomski, Karen Ameden, Nader Hasim, Andrea Ameden, Patrick McQuillian, Travis Thiele, Dillion Thiele, Chrissy Haskins, Dana West, Michael Disibato, David Plants

**Remote:** Rob Willis, Clara Robinson, Vincent Polhemous, Eugene Alletto, Heather Meredith, Karina Martine, Kristi Lembke, Drew Mackelston, Lester (last name unknown), Meredith Block

**Call to Order:** 7:01 PM

## 1. Call for Any Late Additions to the Agenda

No late additions.

## 2. Approve the Minutes of the April 13, 2026 Regular Meeting and April 22, 2026 Special Meeting

**Motion:** Jessica Pollack moved to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2026 Regular Meeting. **Second:** Jason Kass. **Vote:** Passed unanimously.

**Motion:** Jessica Pollack moved to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2026 Special Meeting. **Second:** Jason Kass. **Vote:** Passed unanimously.

## 3. VTrans Presentation – Bridge #42 Replacement (Route 30 over the Winhall River)

Adam Goudreau, P.E., Project Manager, Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), presented on replacement of Bridge #42 and removal of the temporary bridge (see presentation).

VTrans noted that emergency bridge projects do not follow the same approval process as regular projects.

VTrans is in final design and is working on environmental permits.

The bridge includes a superstructure and substructure; bearings connect the two.

The temporary structure is a modular truss bridge. In 2023, a pier was undermined and pavement was washed out. The opening was approximately 950 sq. ft.; the temporary bridge provides a larger opening.

Water overtopped the roadway southeast of the structure.

The upstream embankment may carry debris that could become lodged at the bridge.

Potential project delays/resources: no critical bat habitat, no cultural soils or archaeological concerns. Route 30 is typically a high bicycle route; there is no mass transit.

Traffic volumes were noted as approximately 520 vehicles per hour, with many trucks; the speed limit is 50 mph.

The proposed replacement is a 120-foot steel girder bridge with integral abutments and increased opening. Overtopping is associated with approximately the 2% annual chance event, driven by downstream conditions.

VTrans expects to advertise the project in July 2026. If the advertising date cannot move from August to July, the project may shift from 2027 to 2028.

Estimated cost is \$7.4 million; funding is anticipated to be 85% federal and 15% state.

VTrans noted it would be difficult to remove ledge at the site.

**Public questions:** Andrea Ameden asked whether the project meets headwater ratios and requested information on the hydraulic engineering analysis (including the hydraulic report and geotechnical information), as well as the timing for project milestones.

## 4. Act 181 / S.325 – Update and Community Discussion

Following the prior meeting, the Board discussed the road rule and Tier 3 provisions and sent a letter opposing the act.

The expectation shared was that, in House consideration of Senate bill S.325, certain elements would be repealed.

**Rep. Laura Sibilgia:** The bill remains in committee and may be voted out around May 8. She noted that there is significant concern about permitting and that the House may request a proposal for public outreach on preserving sensitive areas. Repeal of the road rule and Tier 3 provisions was discussed as likely, though some members want full repeal.

**Sen. Nader Hasim:** He said it is difficult to predict how the ANR chair will come out, but noted the chair has indicated he is okay with repeal of both provisions. He would be surprised if they are not repealed, though the conference process remains uncertain.

**Sen. Wendy Harrison:** Noted the Senate's approach has been to delay the road rule and Tier 3 provisions for three years. Said Act 181's intent is to make development easier in towns with water and sewer, but Tier 1A and 1B provisions remain and impacts of repeals are still unclear. Emphasized framing the desired outcome so the public understands where the process is headed.

**Dillion Thiele:** Said the intent was to make things easier, and the road rule made it harder.

**Discussion:** Wendy reiterated the goal is to make development in already-developed areas easier while still protecting what is valuable. General discussion followed on balancing landowner rights with preservation.

**Jessica Pollack:** Said conservation efforts are important and need to be thought through.

**Andrea Ameden:** Asked how the Land Use Review Board (LURB) can improve the Act 250 process and suggested reform should return more power to towns (noting many towns have zoning boards).

**Rep. Laura Sibilgia:** Said Act 250 needs more consistency statewide and noted S.325 includes a joint committee focused on permitting.

**Sen. Nader Hasim:** Noted the high costs of Act 250 are less of a deterrent for very wealthy applicants and said the road rule is a major concern.

**Travis Thiele:** Said Act 181 was too broad and encouraged building consensus around specific projects; he drew a parallel to the education reform bill.

**Dillion Thiele:** Spoke about affordability and housing pressures affecting young families in Jamaica and urged focus on sustaining rural Vermont.

**Jessica Pollack:** Noted Jamaica has no municipal water or sewer and could not afford a bond without outside support; also noted local businesses are sometimes denied system improvements.

## **5. Education Reform and Redistricting – Impact on Jamaica**

**Jessica Pollack** provided an overview of current education funding discussions and redistricting impacts.

There is currently a vote on \$120M in the Senate. There is talk about dividing it over three years, with a 3.8% “buydown” this year. All of this is subject to change over the next 2–3 weeks. Excess spending threshold: bill S.220. Windsor County was noted as hardest hit; Windham County was noted as second.

A concern was raised that Jamaica's budget is driven by the Supervisory Union (SU) budget, which was described as not transparent and not locally approved. Discussion included what towns can do to reduce SU costs.

**Sen. Wendy Harrison:** Said she served on the redistricting committee and encouraged towns to be engaged. She said more time is needed to understand what will happen and noted she voted against reducing the threshold. She emphasized rural areas have different

needs, and raised concern about students spending long periods on buses.

**Rep. Laura Sibilialia:** Said many concerns raised are shared statewide. She noted the Governor wants property tax relief as soon as possible, supports the excess spending level, and supports mandatory consolidations. She said the current House bill provides more bottom-up input, and noted the Governor may veto the budget unless House and Senate agree. She also said the Governor wants to spend down bills.

**Chrissy Haskins:** Noted she sent a letter a couple of weeks prior and encouraged focusing on one immediate request. She said Jamaica needs to be in the Mountain Town district. She also noted that for years there have been discussions about closing the school, and argued that to bring in families, Jamaica needs strong educational opportunity; she asked for support communicating community needs to the Education Committee. Karen Ameden agreed.

**Dana West:** Questioned whether CISA is beneficial and raised concern about adding a principal position (estimated \$235K), suggesting funds should prioritize teachers over additional administration.

**Rep. Laura Sibilialia:** Said Jamaica is in a CISA (Sections 14/15/16). She said the Senate map is “dead on arrival.”

**Sen. Nader Hasim:** Said the purpose of CISA is to share costs across a specific region. He noted the Senate is still looking at bills and commented that the Senate Education Committee is not good at crafting education policy. He described the bill as “Act 46 2.0” without tax incentives: two years of voluntary mergers, followed by potential forced mergers based on the Department of Education. He said forced mergers are harmful. Discussion included questions about how maps will come together; it was noted this is not yet known. It was also noted there is less desire to fight with the House, and that many Senators are not supportive of forced mergers.

Rep. Laura Sibilialia said she would like communities to have more ability to direct outcomes and noted the top-down map has not been released; Sen. Hasim agreed.

**Wendy Harrison** said she does not think studies alone will resolve concerns and asked what the town needs from legislators to help Jamaica compete for permanent residents. She also asked about potential drawbacks of moving to a different district and noted a possible loss of \$1M if leaving the district.

A comment was made that many in town are figuring out ways to make ends meet.

**Dana West:** Asked whether the focus is on education structure, noting there are four superintendents in Windham County, and asked whether the SU structure is being evaluated.

**Travis Thiele:** Said taxes are too high. He noted Jamaica is rated in the top five in the country due to education opportunities that school choice can offer, but only in towns with school choice. He asked about perspectives on school choice and expressed concern that efforts to cut taxes could undermine education.

**Laura Sibilialia** said many districts have school choice. She did not find it equitable and would not support universal school choice, noting it can leave rural low-income communities behind. She referenced the Maine decision, which allowed some tuition and (per *Carson v. Makin*) may not prohibit a parent from choosing a religious school. She noted there are only 18 schools that allow choice.

**Sen. Nader Hasim:** Said it depends whether he supports school choice; he said it works in some areas and not others. He noted towns have different needs and spoke to cost disparities. He referenced Act 73 and said tuition must match the foundation formula. He said choice should not be cut out completely and that standards across private schools are

important.

**Sen. Wendy Harrison:** Said she has similar concerns. She said she supports the historic academies, but noted limitations on admissions and said that is an issue with L&G. She said an independent schools task force could harm public schools and emphasized her job is to protect public schools. She said they are essential for democracy and noted that during COVID, some schools did more in areas without private schools. She said the entire community should be part of the conversation and emphasized local decision-making.

**Rep. Laura Sibilia:** Stated that, under Act 60 (Brigham), control rested at the state level. Chrissy asked what Wendy Harrison needs to hear from the town in order to support Jamaica.

**Sen. Wendy Harrison:** Said she has received letters and has also spoken with others who hold different opinions. She said the town should be heard and, even when she may not agree, she will communicate the town's voice.

#### **6. Sale of Town-Owned Properties**

Jessica Pollack will provide a script to Tom this week or next week; Tom will then advertise the sale.

Tom will also contact the abutting landowner for Pike's Falls property.

#### **7. Roadside and Cemetery Mowing Bids**

One bid was received from Austin Meeks. Total for cemeteries and cleanup: \$11,515.

**Motion:** Greg Meuelemans moved to accept the mowing bid from Austin Meeks. **Second:** Robert Brooks. **Vote:** Passed unanimously.

#### **8. Overweight Permit(s)**

**Motion:** Jessica Pollack moved to approve an overweight permit for AS Clark and Sons.

**Second:** Robert Brooks. **Vote:** Passed unanimously.

#### **9. Time Sheets (Town Office, Listers, Highway, and Transfer Station)**

**Motion:** Jessica Pollack moved to approve the time sheets. **Second:** Robert Brooks. **Vote:** Passed unanimously.

#### **10. Pay Orders**

**Motion:** Jessica Pollack moved to approve pay orders as presented. **Second:** Jason Kass.

**Vote:** Passed unanimously.

#### **11. Public Concerns and Announcements**

- Bingo on Friday.
- Yoga on Sunday.
- Strength group on Monday.
- Green Up Day is Saturday, May 1 (group in the village 9:00 AM–12:00 PM).
- Mayfest: May 16.
- Karen is selling plants for \$50 to create a pollinator garden.
- Whitewater release this Saturday and Sunday.
- Community supper Saturday at the church, 4:30–7:00 PM.
- A token system is expected to be up and running in May for the Transfer Station.
- Michael Disabato raised concern about a vehicle parked at Pike's Falls partially obstructing the roadway and summer safety/traffic impacts (often 30–40 cars).
- The Town spoke with the Sheriff; Robert will follow up with Sheriff Mark Anderson.
- The Town could paint the roadway; speeding signs should be installed.
- Michael Disabato will do water testing every other Wednesday morning.
- Pike's Falls: signage on the first bridge was discussed; no update.

#### **12. Executive Session (if needed)**

### **13. Adjourn**

**Motion:** Jessica Pollack moved to adjourn. **Second:** Jason Kass. **Vote:** Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

#### **Appendix: Legislative Attendees (for Items 4 and 5)**

**Representative Laura Sibilila**, Member of House Committee on Environment and Energy

**Senator Wendy Harrison**, Member of the School District Redistricting Task Force

**Senator Nader Hasim**, Member of Senate Education Committee