

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR SESSION MEETING MINUTES
BLACKSTONE MUNICIPAL CENTER
15 ST. PAUL STREET
JOHN ELDRIDGE MEETING ROOM**

Town Clerk
Town of Blackstone

FEB 25 REC'D

JANUARY 13, 2026 (6:30 PM)

Time: _____
RECEIVED

1. Pledge of Allegiance & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman Keefe. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the Board members and meeting attendees. A moment of silence was observed in memory of fallen Uxbridge Police Officer Stephen LaPorte.

2. Roll Call - Attendance

Present were Chairman Daniel Keefe, Vice Chairman Michael Sweeney, Selectwoman Mary Bulso, Selectman Edward Castonguay, and Selectman Gino Olaes. Also present were Town Administrator Chad Lovett and Assistant Town Administrator/Town Accountant Lauren Taylor.

3. Accept Minutes of Meetings of Workshop Sessions & Regular Session

- **a) Workshop Session: December 30, 2025 (SemiQuincentennial)**
- **b) Regular Session: December 23, 2025**
 - Motion: Vice Chairman Sweeney made a motion to approve the December 30, 2025 workshop session meeting minutes; seconded by Selectman Castonguay. Vote unanimous; motion passed.
 - Motion: Vice Chairman Sweeney made a motion to approve the December 23, 2025 regular session meeting minutes; seconded by Selectman Castonguay. Vote unanimous; motion passed.

4. Citizens Forum: Good & Welfare - Public

5. Public Hearings-

Public Hearing - 6:45 PM: The Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on January 13, 2025, at 6:45 PM at the Blackstone Municipal Center, John Eldridge Meeting Room, 15 St. Paul Street, to consider an application for a Home Occupation License submitted by Dion Puleo, d/b/a Rescue Ready, 196 Blackstone Street. All interested parties are encouraged to attend and be heard.

Chairman Keefe opened the public hearing at 6:45 PM by reading the required legal notice. He acknowledged the format was different than Zoning/Planning hearings explaining that it is essentially a public notice requiring newspaper posting, not a hearing requiring formal open/close procedures or abutter notifications. He noted that because no public comments were present or anticipated, the item was moved along without a formal "open" or "close" motion. The public hearing was held to consider the application submitted by Dion Puleo, d/b/a Ready to Rescue, for a CPR training business operated from his home.

Mr. Lovett confirmed the application was properly posted and complete. The applicant was not present for comments but had been cooperative and patient during the review process.

- Motion: Selectwoman Bulso made a motion to approve the Home Occupation License subitted by Dion Puleo, d/b/a Ready to Rescue, 196 Blackstone Street; seconded by Vice Chairman Sweeney. Vote unanimous; motion passed.

6. Correspondence

Departmental updates were included in the Selectmen's meeting packets. No additional correspondence was discussed.

7. Town Announcements & Events

Selectwoman Bulso noted that the Blackstone Firefighters Union is selling sweatshirts as a fundraiser in memory of Officer LaPorte. Donations can also be made anonymously. The Fire Union posted the fundraiser on its Facebook page.

Chairman Keefe supported further promoting it, if allowable under Town policies.

8. Liaison Reports/Boards & Commissions

Selectman Castonguay announced that the Economic Development Committee (EDC) now has a quorum with the appointment of Elyse Gesmondi as the fourth member. EDC is scheduling meetings to begin work in 2026 and continues seeking three additional members.

Selectwoman Bulso will attend the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting on Thursday to advocate for grants beneficial to the Town. She also reported on progress with the School Building Committee, which will meet Wednesday at 5:00 PM. The meeting is open to the public and focuses on outreach regarding upcoming school projects.

Chairman Keefe provided an update on the school district's preliminary budget, noting a projected increase of approximately \$2 million over the previous year, which is expected to decrease with further review. A \$500,000 error in the budget was already corrected. Joint meetings with Finance Committees and Boards of Selectmen from both Towns will be scheduled. A notification letter will be sent out regarding formation of an ad hoc committee to review the regional agreement, now a mandated action every 5 years under new language ("shall" instead of "may").

9. Town Administrator Report

No formal report was presented at this meeting.

10. Old Business

- a) **FY27 Budget and Warrant Article Updates**

This agenda item was not discussed.

11. New Business

- a) **Discharge Release of Certificate Not to Encumber - 68 Main Street**

Attorney Chris Ryan requested the Board approve a certificate of release for a 2008 housing assistance lien placed on 68 Main Street. The lien terms required a 15-year occupancy to avoid repayment. The 15-year term had passed without triggering any repayment conditions. The family wishes to sell the home following Johnny Morin's passing and needs a clear title.

Chairman Keefe expressed condolences and acknowledged Mr. Morin's contributions to the town.

- **Motion:** Selectwoman Bulso made a motion to release the certificate not to encumber on 68 Main Street; seconded by Vice Chairman Sweeney. Vote unanimous; motion passed.

After the vote, Selectman Castonguay asked for a brief overview of the Blackstone Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Chairman Keefe stated it was a grant-based program active in the early 2000s, offering residents assistance for home repairs (roofing, windows, boilers, etc.). It is currently inactive, but there is over \$212,000 in the fund from repayments.

The Board discussed reviving the program to assist residents in hardship but Town officials confirmed administrative support and funding challenges.

Ms. Taylor confirmed that funds can only be used if an active program is in place.

The Board agreed to revisit this topic in a future meeting or town administrator report, including potential administrative structure and grant match opportunities. There is interest in targeting assistance to elderly or vulnerable residents.

- **b) Matters that the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen did not Reasonably Anticipate Discussing Forty-Eight Hours Prior to the Meeting**

None.

- **c) Approval of Payroll Warrant #26EWA17, #26PW17**

- Motion: Selectwoman Bulso made a motion to approve payroll warrants #26EWA17 and #26PW17; seconded by Vice Chairman Sweeney. Vote unanimous; motion passed.

- **d) Approval of Vendor Warrant #26EW17A, #26EW17B**

- Motion: Selectwoman Bulso made a motion to approve vendor warrant #26EW17A and #26EW17B; seconded by Vice Chairman Sweeney. Vote unanimous; motion passed.

12. Future Board Agenda Items

Future agenda items included an update on Housing Rehabilitation Program and a Feasibility Study Proposal for Regional Dispatch.

Chairman Keefe reminded Board members to submit agenda items in writing (email or text) to Chairman Keefe and Administrators Lovett/Taylor for consistency and recordkeeping.

13. Good & Welfare - Selectmen

Selectman Castonguay extended birthday wishes to Melissa Cottenwah, Marissa Santos, and Bethany Grumbach. He congratulated the winners of "Blingin' Up Blackstone" and praised the community engagement. He encouraged residents to check the Blackstone Library and Parks and Recreation Facebook pages for events.

Selectwoman Bulso expressed condolences to the LaPorte family and praised support from Chief Roy and the Blackstone Police Department for providing assistance to Uxbridge. She announced that the funeral procession would pass through the Imperial Cars complex on Thursday from 12:30 to 1:30 PM, with parking available nearby. She concluded by reminding the public of the School Building Committee meeting Wednesday at 5:00 PM.

Chairman Keefe reiterated condolences to the Uxbridge community and Officer LaPorte's family.

14. Adjournment

- Motion: Michael Sweeney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 PM; seconded by Mary Bulso. Vote unanimous; motion passed.

Time: 7:04 PM

Next Meeting: January 27, 2026

Meeting Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Sara Peters