Village of Walden

Village Board of Trustees Meeting

July 21, 2026

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM

Total duration: approximately 1 hour 57 minutes

Attendance

Role	Name	Attendance
Mayor	Becky Pearson	Present
Trustee	Lynn Thompson	Present
Trustee	Gerald Mishk	Present
Trustee	Cheryl Baker	Absent
Trustee	Kristie Hall	Present
Trustee	Jerred Sanusi	Present
Trustee	Jose De Jesus	Present
Village Attorney	John Cappello	Present
Village Clerk	Anisetta Valdez	Present
Village Manager	Tony Cardone	Present

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes

Mayor Pearson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Minutes

Roll call was taken. All members of the Board were present with the exception of Trustee Baker, who was absent (Mayor Pearson noted Trustee Baker was not feeling well).

3. Public Hearing

Minutes

No public hearing was scheduled for this meeting.

4. Manager's Report

Minutes

Village Manager Cardone presented his report covering July 8–21, 2026, highlighting the following: the DPW F550 truck was registered with the DMV and insured, and is road-ready.

The Village closed the BANs (bond anticipation notes) last Friday with bond counsel Rob Smith of Delafield Hawkins. Two DPW laborers were interviewed and hired; the Village lost its water department laborer to resignation, but a strong prior candidate was contacted and hired on Friday. After discussions with Brian Koenig, the Village moved forward with Healy (rather than the Town of Blooming Grove) for transmission work. A building department fire inspection conducted by Javier found numerous fire extinguishers out of certification (some dating to 2023); a company used by the Town of Montgomery was contracted and recertified them the same afternoon. The Manager met with the CDBG Committee regarding the Gladstone sidewalk project, which he does not believe will score high enough for that grant, and asked whether the Village could pivot the application to the recently repaired front door instead; the Committee is reviewing. The Village is moving forward with the salt barn project — specifications have been sent to DPW, and Village Engineer John Queenan (JQ), who will prepare a bid package. Fred of Perfect Temp visited twice regarding the HVAC system in the library meeting room; the new system is performing well, and Fred addressed a condensation drain issue (blown out twice) that appears to be resolved. Francisca Mercado, the new account clerk, is acclimating well and has already resolved several issues for the water department. The Village made an offer to a candidate for DPW Superintendent, who declined, so the Village is pursuing other candidates. The downstairs front door repair is complete. Sewer/water pump issues are discussed later on the agenda. The Manager is working with Civil Service to address employee title issues. He toured Most Precious Blood and the Walden summer camp/DPW, met with Assemblyman Brian Maher's office (Megan attending), and, aside from department head meetings, met with Trustee Mishk regarding potential grants; the Village may be able to stack an additional sewer grant onto its existing sewer funding and may add the Gladstone sidewalks (which are in significant disrepair) to that scope.

Transcript

Mayor Pearson asked the Board if there were any questions for the Manager; none were raised.

Trustee Hall asked whether the Manager's report could be provided to the Board earlier, since it is difficult to review when received the same day. Manager Cardone explained the report is typically not finalized until the day of the meeting because he includes updates through that day.

5. Minutes — 7/7/2026

Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes of the July 7, 2026 meeting made by Trustee Mishk.

Transcript

Mayor Pearson noted two corrections: (1) the reference regarding Mel Wessenberg should read “he,” not “she,” reflecting that, “Mel Wessenberg indicated he would be willing to continue serving through the end of his term”; and (2) Item 11 should reference “Wait Street,” not “Wade Street.”

Minutes approved as amended. All in favor. Motion carried.

6. Payment of Audited Bills

Minutes

Motion by Trustee Sanusi. Second by Trustee Mishk. No discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Public Comment on the Business of the Board

Minutes

Mayor Pearson invited comment from members of the public present. No comments were offered; Mayor Pearson thanked attendees for coming out in the rain.

8. Business of the Board of Trustees

8a. Park Use Request

i. Brooke Duffy

Minutes

Motion to accept made by Trustee Hall. Second by Trustee Sanusi. No discussion. All in favor.

8b. Sewer Pump — Discussion

Minutes

Manager Cardone reminded the Board that in November the Board approved replacement of the sewer pump at a cost of approximately $250,000–$254,000, funded from two sources: $130,000 from the sewer plant generator fund and $124,000 from an I&I fund (recorded under the title “Smoke Test”). He recommended that future fund transfers be itemized by line item, noting significant staff time was spent locating the source of the money. He advised the pump is at the end of its useful life; DPW Superintendent John Quinon flagged the issue, and the replacement pump will take approximately six weeks to arrive before repairs can be completed.

Transcript

Mayor Pearson stated she recalled being told previously that this work had already been completed. Trustee Thompson recalled a separate, related emergency repair to the sewer vault; Manager Cardone confirmed it involves the same pump station.

Trustee Hall asked whether the cost would remain the same; Manager Cardone said he hoped so but would not know until the pump is ordered. Trustee Sanusi asked whether the project needs to go out to bid; Manager Cardone and Attorney Cappello explained that projects above the procurement threshold (approximately $30,000) generally require bidding, but that DPW planned to solicit at least three quotes given the emergency nature of the repair.

Attorney Cappello recommended the Board authorize the Village Manager to either solicit formal bids or proceed under the previously acknowledged emergency circumstances, and report back to the Board (by the August 1 meeting) on the appropriate path forward.

Trustee Thompson noted she recalled a separate $40,000 emergency vault repair from the prior fall and asked to review the prior meeting minutes for clarification. Trustee Mishk questioned why the matter was being revisited given the November approval; Mayor Pearson clarified the item is moving forward, not being reconsidered.

No formal motion was made; the Board directed the Village Manager to confirm the appropriate procurement path with the Village Engineer and Attorney and report back as soon as possible.

8c. Intro to Local Law — Night Sky — Discussion

Minutes

Mayor Pearson reintroduced the draft Night Sky (outdoor lighting) local law for discussion, noting the County has not yet responded and that the Village has resumed work on the law. Trustee Mishk asked whether the draft aligns with lighting legislation currently pending at the

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state level; Attorney Cappello advised that the Village's draft is more restrictive and detailed than the state proposal, which currently only addresses general shielding requirements.

Trustee Hall asked whether Section 168-3 (Prohibited Lighting Types) addresses motion-activated wall-pack/driveway lighting. Trustee Sanusi explained the concept of “night sky” compliance relates to the direction light is cast (uplight, backlight, glare) so that light does not spill onto neighboring properties. Trustee De Jesus noted lighting concerns on Stewart Street that should be addressed.

Trustee Sanusi, drawing on professional lighting knowledge, noted the draft relies on undefined technical classifications (light-output ratings such as uplight/backlight/glare) and that some sections use those classifications incorrectly; while the underlying intent is sound, the wording needs revision. He offered to work directly with the Village Attorney on corrected language, including adding a definitions section. Trustee Hall volunteered to assist. Attorney Cappello noted the draft was adapted from several other municipalities' laws and confirmed it goes beyond the (not-yet-adopted) state shielding standard, and recommended the Building Department — which will ultimately enforce the law — be consulted on the revised language.

8d. Intro to Local Law — Firepits & Burning — Discussion

Minutes

Mayor Pearson reviewed proposed revisions to the draft fire pit and outdoor burning local law, noting the changes (drawn in part from the Village of Warwick's law) primarily adjust required setback distances from neighboring properties and are not intended to eliminate fire pits. The principal substantive change was to §144-11 (Unlawful Burning), prohibiting the burning of trash, lumber, plastic, tires, chemicals, garbage, refuse, and yard debris within the Village, with an exception under Chapter 110 permitting supervised burning by the DPW Superintendent and Fire Department.

Trustee Hall asked whether the draft, as written, would prohibit use of a natural gas or propane grill. Attorney Cappello clarified that the prohibition addresses what materials may be burned (e.g., wood, trash), not the appliance itself, so a propane grill burning nothing prohibited would remain permitted; the Board agreed to add express language confirming propane/natural gas outdoor cooking is allowed, to avoid future ambiguity.

Discussion followed regarding the definitions of “balcony” and “deck” and whether covered decks, balconies, and porches should be treated consistently for grilling purposes (Trustee Mishk, Trustee Hall, Trustee Thompson, Manager Cardone, Attorney Cappello). The Board agreed the law should reference covered porches, decks, and patios together, and requested that staff confirm consistency with the applicable New York State Building Code provisions before finalizing.

The Board also agreed to add a provision authorizing the Village to declare and publicize a burn ban during dry conditions (e.g., via CodeRED and the Village website), addressing Trustee Thompson's question about how such a determination would be communicated to residents. The Board directed the Attorney to incorporate the agreed revisions for the next meeting, after which a public hearing will be scheduled, tentatively along with the Village's other pending local laws on September 1.

8e. School Resource Officer — Discussion & Resolution

Minutes

Trustee Hall asked about the SRO agreement deadline and whether it had been missed; Mayor Pearson advised the school district was informed a final decision would be made at this meeting. Trustee Thompson recalled the district's original deadline was in mid-to-late July.

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Mayor Pearson explained the delay resulted from Board members wanting to confirm reimbursement amounts to ensure the Village would not be paying more for the officers than it is reimbursed.

Trustee Mishk stated he does not object to the SRO program itself but objects to how the contract is presented — as a flat, up-front price — rather than billed based on actual hours/overtime worked, and questioned why the Town of Montgomery receives a higher reimbursement rate for the same service. He noted uncertainty about how partial school days are compensated and stated the negotiation process should begin earlier in the year (e.g., May) rather than at the last minute, though he ultimately supports the program.

Manager Cardone reported that he and the Village Treasurer met with the Police Chief and set this year's reimbursement rate at the top part-time step, with an additional discussion of adding roughly 3% for retirement benefits; he noted the Village is not permitted to profit from the arrangement, unlike (in his view) the rate structure used by the Town of Montgomery. Attorney Cappello clarified the Village is reimbursed for the cost of providing the officer, not paid a markup.

Mayor Pearson noted the Village previously sought full cost-based reimbursement and was denied, and that if the Village does not sign the agreement, the Town of Montgomery would take over SRO duties at the school. Trustee Hall stated a preference for keeping the Village's own officers at the school given their proximity and response time. Trustee Thompson noted the current management team provides stronger financial oversight than in past years, that the contract was well thought out between the Manager, Treasurer, and Chief, and that built-in coverage exists for half-days and snow days; she stated her support for the program and for the Village's officers' quick response time.

Motion to sign the resolution made by Trustee Mishk. Second by Trustee De Jesus. All in favor. Motion Carried.

Manager Cardone was directed to ensure the signed agreement is returned to the school district.

8f. Meeting Rules Presentation — Discussion

Minutes

Mayor Pearson presented a revised set of Board meeting rules, based on the Village of Warwick's rules (which she found less unwieldy than a previously circulated draft), modified for Walden. The Board reviewed the document section by section and agreed on the following changes:

Regular meetings to be changed from Mondays to Tuesdays, at 6:30 PM in the Colonel Bradley Room, with language allowing the schedule to be adjusted at the Board's annual organizational meeting.

Regular meetings may be cancelled at the direction of the Mayor (and the Board), rather than the Manager.

Special meetings may be called by the Mayor or by four Trustees (a quorum), with at least 72 hours' notice to the Board (by phone, in person, email, or in writing); a separate emergency meeting provision (without the 72-hour requirement) was added for urgent circumstances.

The agenda will continue to be set by the Mayor (or designee) in coordination with the Village Clerk; department/village items are due to the Clerk by end of day Thursday before the meeting, and outside/non-village requests are also due by Thursday.

Items may be added to the agenda prior to the meeting by two Board members, or during the meeting by majority vote; the Board agreed any late addition should be posted publicly (as a tentative addition) as soon as possible so the public has notice.

The completed agenda and packet are to be posted on the Village website no later than end of business on the Friday before the meeting; a separate "addendum" distribution provision was removed as redundant with the emergency-item process already discussed.

Claims to be audited are to be prepared by the Treasurer and available for audit by noon/end of day on the Friday before the meeting, and require a minimum of four Board member signatures.

A prior requirement that votes be recorded strictly as "yes" or "no" was removed as unnecessary.

The minutes provision was revised to require that minutes reflect a full record of all motions, proposals, resolutions, and votes taken, as well as conversations held by the Trustees, Mayor, and public — i.e., minutes closer to a full record than a brief summary.

Under General Rules of Procedure, the requirement that Board members be recognized by the presiding officer before speaking was retained. The requirement that a motion to close or limit debate receive a two-thirds vote was revised to a Board majority, as the Board found a numeric two-thirds threshold unclear for a seven-member board (Attorney Cappello and Trustee Thompson).

Guidelines for public comment were revised to require speakers to sign in with their name (and organization, if representing one), but to no longer require speakers to publicly state their home address, in light of privacy concerns raised by Trustee Thompson, Trustee De Jesus, and the Village Clerk, and past litigation over residency restrictions on public comment noted by Trustee Mishk. Attorney Cappello confirmed the Village cannot require residency information, though a speaker may volunteer it for the record.

The three-minute public comment time limit, and the Board's ability to extend a speaker's time or permit a speaker to yield time to another (e.g., a professional representative) by majority vote, were retained.

The Board directed the Village Attorney and Clerk to finalize the revised rules incorporating these changes for further review.

8g. Code Review — Chapter 132 — Double Pole Utility Removal

Minutes

Mayor Pearson noted the major change was reflected in the redlined version circulated to the Board. Manager Cardone suggested the term "ghost poles" also be incorporated alongside "double utility poles," as that terminology is commonly used in the field. Attorney Cappello agreed to revise the document to consistently use "ghost poles."

9. Public Comment

No members of the public came forward to speak.

10. Correspondence

Minutes

Mayor Pearson reported receiving an email regarding e-bike use in the Village park; she noted a relevant new law is in place and has referred the matter to the Police Chief and Village Manager to be addressed. She also noted an email from James Sullivan regarding Orange County Transit; Trustee Sanusi asked why the county does not offer service to the Village, and Trustee Hall suggested the Village follow up, potentially by letter. Attorney Cappello noted the Building Inspector has relevant information and has already met with DPW Superintendent John Queenan regarding related items.

Trustee Hall raised a construction-related email; Mayor Pearson suggested the Village Manager coordinate with the Building Inspector, noting the matter has been outstanding for some time and circumstances continue to change.

Mayor Pearson circulated correspondence from the City of Newburgh, including a letter regarding a proposed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility, noting Newburgh is seeking support from neighboring communities in opposing the facility and that the building in question was not designed to house detainees.

Trustee De Jesus stated the Village should consider supporting the opposition, noting the building was originally intended as a warehouse and reports that people are being detained there. Trustee Sanusi raised concerns about existing infrastructure limitations at the site, the added cost of utility upgrades, and public-safety risks associated with potential protest activity along Route 17K, while acknowledging valid concerns on both sides. Trustee Mishk stated he was torn — while he felt Newburgh should have adequate infrastructure for its own facilities, he noted Walden has its own priorities to manage.

Mayor Pearson proposed dividing the review of the correspondence among Board members (Trustees Sanusi, Thompson, Mishk, De Jesus, and Hall) to read and report back, noting the Village's position as a neighboring community that may itself rely on Newburgh's support in the future.

Motion to approve a resolution to transfer funds from account A-240 to A-200 (for a NYCLASS-related matter), as requested by the Village Manager, made by Trustee Thompson. Second by Trustee Mishk. All in favor.

Manager Cardone reported he has tentatively scheduled Orange County Executive Director Conor Eckert to attend the August 18 meeting and asked the Board to provide topics for discussion.

Trustee Hall noted the Walden Fire Department is hosting an upcoming event, and raised ongoing concerns regarding traffic obstacles on Gladstone and missing “no parking” signage (she has photographs and would like the matter addressed). Mayor Pearson raised the pothole on Grove Street and asked that responsibility for its repair be identified.

11. Miscellaneous Comments from the Board of Trustees

No additional comments were raised.

12. Executive Session

Motion to enter executive session made by Trustee Mishk. Second by Trustee Hall. All in favor.

Minutes

Motion made by Trustee Hall to offer Kate Luciani the Full-Time Village Manager position. Seconded by Trustee Sanusi.

Roll Call Vote:

- Trustee Mishk — Nay
- Trustee Thompson — Aye
- Trustee Baker -- Absent
- Trustee De Jesus — Nay
- Trustee Hall — Aye
- Trustee Sanusi – Aye
- Mayor Pearson — Aye

Motion to hire Kate Luciani at a salary up to $100k based on benefit package taken as Full-Time Village Manager made by Trustee Mishk. Seconded by Trustee De Jesus. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made to end executive session made by Trustee Mishk. Seconded by Trustee Thompson. All in favor. Motion carried.

13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Trustee Mishk. Seconded by Trustee De Jesus. All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY

Anisetta Valdez, Village Clerk

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