

Town of Leicester Work Meeting, May 12, 2026

Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2026, 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The Work Meeting of the Town of Leicester Town Board was called to order on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 7:00 PM at Leicester, NY.

a. Pledge to the Flag

Highway Superintendent Russell Page led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

b. Board Members Present/Excused: All Present

Present: Town Supervisor Richard White, Deputy Supervisor/Councilmember Jason Yasso, Councilmember Gerald Hull, Councilmember Karen Roffe, Councilmember Matt Durbin

c. Others Present: Town Clerk, Town Attorney James Campbell

Present: Town Clerk/Tax Collector Amy L. Neumann, Town Attorney James Campbell, Highway Superintendent Russell Page

d. Public Present

Ken Mock Jr., John Yasso, Dennis Prevost, Ryan Garrison, Finn Robertson, Livingston County Planning, Sinclair Ogaf, Livingston County Planning, Megan Crowe, Livingston County Planning, Mark Lamendola, ECCTechnologies, Lana Scofield, Wayne Scofield, and one more name unrecognizable.

2. County Planning Department; Fiber Update

Director of County Planning Megan Crowe appeared before the Board alongside a delegation that included Justin Zagorski of ECC Technologies (project consultant), Sinclair and Finn Robertson of the County Planning Department, Ryan Garrison of Hunt Engineers (project manager), and Mark Lamendola of Empire Access (private Internet service provider). Director Crowe offered the Board a thorough update on the county's ongoing broadband expansion efforts within the Town of Leicester.

Director Crowe explained that the effort traces back to a 2019 countywide survey — drawing over 2,000 responses — in which residents overwhelmingly expressed that they wanted local government to step in and help expand broadband access. The county chose not to become an Internet service provider itself, and instead put out a request for proposals, ultimately entering into a public-private partnership with Empire Access beginning in 2020.

The first phase of funding came through the USDA Reconnect Grant program, which targets the most rural, unserved areas. Livingston County was awarded \$11,000,000, with the county contributing a \$3,700,000 match (25 percent). Empire Access, as the grant recipient, owns the infrastructure built under this program. Using those funds, the county constructed a backbone fiber ring around Livingston County with distribution laterals extending outward.

The second and more recent phase is the Municipal Infrastructure Program (MIP), funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. The county received a \$26,000,000 state grant, which must be fully deployed by December 31, 2026 — a deadline Director Crowe and the team indicated they do not expect to see extended. This program differs from the Reconnect grant in that it is not restricted to unserved areas and is address-based rather than

census block-based, allowing for broader coverage. Together, the two programs are expected to serve approximately 312 addresses in the Town of Leicester.

Justin Zagorski elaborated on the construction timelines. The Reconnect backbone — approximately 7.75 miles of cable through Leicester serving roughly 171 households — is currently under construction, with some portions already complete. The MIP project is divided into two service areas within Leicester: Service Area 2 is currently under construction, while Service Area 3 is in the make-ready phase, with some delays attributable to National Grid's pole preparation timeline. Mr. Zagorski noted that the county pushed USDA to allow the backbone to serve all properties along the route, not just those in unserved census blocks, maximizing the reach of the investment.

Finn Robertson described the public-facing resources available through the Light Up Livingston website (lightuplivingston.com), where residents can check their address for service availability, get estimated timelines, and sign up with Empire Access directly. A dedicated phone number and email are also available through the end of 2026.

Mark Lamendola of Empire Access outlined the service offerings: three tiers of 100 percent fiber Internet at 500 Mbps, 1 Gbps, and 2 Gbps, with symmetrical upload and download speeds. There are no installation charges, and a modem and router are provided at no cost. Bundled landline and television options are also available. Mr. Lamendola encouraged residents to sign up as early as possible, noting that if installation can occur before the grant period closes, long-run costs — including costs for properties set far back from the road — may be covered by grant funds.

Councilmember Gerald Hull raised a concern about the height of fiber lines being strung on poles, noting that legally the minimum clearance is 14 feet, but he had observed lines installed at heights as low as 12 feet. He stated his farm equipment runs at 13.6 feet and warned that low lines would come down. He also questioned whether lines needed to be set as far as 10 feet below power lines. Director Crowe acknowledged this as a recurring concern in agricultural communities and noted that the project budget includes provisions for redesigns, including undergrounding where necessary. She encouraged the Board to reach out directly if specific locations are problematic.

Highway Superintendent, Russell Page inquired about the use of easements and right-of-way, noting she had not yet seen any road use permits for Leicester. Mr. Zagorski confirmed that aerial deployment primarily stays within existing right-of-way and that for underground work, coordination with the town would be required before construction reached Leicester in earnest. He committed to reaching out to coordinate in advance, and Highway Superintendent Russell Page requested to be included in any ride-along process, citing the county's past experience doing so in Groveland.

Town Supervisor Richard White asked about roads that appeared grayed out on the map with no planned service. Mr. Zagorski explained that those roads had no eligible addresses under the grant criteria and that no plans exist to extend service there under current funding. Director Crowe added that private extension by Empire Access may be possible in some cases and noted that the county is maintaining an informal list of addresses just beyond current build-out endpoints as potential future opportunities.

Financial Impact & Community Benefit

The broadband expansion serving Leicester represents a combined investment of approximately \$37,000,000 across two funding programs: the \$11,000,000 USDA Reconnect Grant (with a \$3,700,000 county match) and the \$26,000,000 New York State MIP grant funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. Empire Access holds the Reconnect-funded infrastructure, while the county leads the MIP project. The effort is designed to be self-sustaining, with subscriber revenue supporting ongoing operations at no additional taxpayer cost beyond the initial public investment. The urgency is driven by the MIP grant's hard December 31, 2026 deadline. For residents and agricultural businesses in Leicester, the concrete benefit is access to 100 percent fiber Internet — with no installation fee and no modem cost — serving approximately 312 addresses that would otherwise remain unserved or underserved. Construction progress and service availability are actively tracked and communicated via the Light Up Livingston platform.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. Held Over – Work Minutes of 4/14/26

Motion to approve the Work Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2026 as written was made by Councilmember Karen Roffe and seconded by Councilmember Matthew Durbin. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Regular Board Meeting of April 28th, 2026

Motion to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2026 as written was made by Councilmember Karen Roffe and seconded by Councilmember Matthew Durbin. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Public Hearing of May 6th, 2026 (Hold)

Approval of the Public Hearing Minutes of May 6, 2026 was held over for a future meeting.

4. Reports / Communications to the Board

a. Held Over – Supervisors Report and Budget Report

Town Supervisor Richard White noted that the Supervisor's Report and Budget Report, which had been held over from the previous meeting, were subsequently transmitted to Board members electronically. He advised any member who had not received them to notify him so copies could be provided.

5. PT/WTWD

a. NYS SEQR Application

Town Attorney James Campbell guided the Board through the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process as a prerequisite to forming the West Town Water District. He explained that the proposed action is classified as a Type 1 action, requiring completion of a Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF). Part 1 of the EAF had been prepared by Clark Patterson Lee, describing the project scope, infrastructure location, and mapping. Attorney Campbell then led the Board through Part 2 of the EAF — the Board's own determination of potential environmental impacts — noting that, while Clark Patterson had provided anticipated answers based on their project knowledge, the law requires the town board, as lead agency, to make those determinations themselves.

Attorney Campbell read each of the 18 impact categories and their associated sub-questions aloud. The Board verbally confirmed responses for each item, generally affirming "no or small impact" findings across categories including land disturbance, surface water, groundwater, flooding, air quality, flora and fauna, agricultural resources, noise, and community character. For categories where the EAF indicated a "yes" — such as impacts on land, surface water, groundwater, flooding, loss of flora or fauna, agricultural resources, and noise — the Board worked through the sub-questions methodically, concurring in most instances that anticipated impacts were minor and mitigated by standard construction practices, regulatory compliance, and coordination with agencies such as SHPO and DEC.

One notable point of discussion arose under the historic and archaeological resources category, where Clark Patterson's draft had characterized one sub-question as potentially a "moderate to large impact" due to known archaeological sites in the area. Highway Superintendent Russell Page suggested that given where the water lines are to be installed, it was more appropriate to classify this as a small impact. The full Board agreed, and the answer was adjusted accordingly. Attorney Campbell confirmed that the Board's answers constitute the official findings for Part 2 and form the basis for a negative declaration — a formal statement that the proposed action is unlikely to result in significant adverse environmental consequences, thereby satisfying the SEQRA review requirement and allowing the Board to proceed without a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

b. Resolution 0501-2026 – SEQRA – Roll Call Vote

Deputy Supervisor/Councilmember Jason Yasso moved to adopt Resolution 0501-2026, classifying the proposed action as a Type 1 SEQRA action, designating the Town Board as lead agency, and issuing a negative declaration. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Matthew Durbin. Upon roll call vote: Councilmember Matt Durbin — Yes; Councilmember Karen Roffe — Yes; Councilmember Gerald Hull

— Yes; Councilmember Jason Yasso — Yes; Town Supervisor Richard White — Yes. Motion Passed 5-0.

Attorney Campbell directed Town Clerk/Tax Collector Amy L. Neumann to scan and distribute the signed SEQRA documents to himself, Town Supervisor White, and the project engineer, and noted that the negative declaration must be filed with the Environmental Notice Bulletin.

c. Water District Formation

Attorney Campbell read the full text of Resolution 0502-2026 — an Order to Establish the Town of Leicester West Town Water District — into the record. The resolution documented the full legislative history of the district formation process, including the 2019 survey, the December 2024 authorization of the map, plan, and report, the permissive referendum period during which no petition was filed, the acceptance of the final Map Plan and Report prepared by Clark Patterson Lee (dated January 2026), the petition by qualifying property owners, the April 2026 resolution ordering a public hearing, and the public hearing held on May 6, 2026.

The resolution further set forth the Board's findings that the petition was legally sufficient, that all property within the district is benefited, that the public hearing was properly noticed, and that formation is in the public interest. The district encompasses approximately 50,545 linear feet of 8-inch water main along Peoria Road, New Road, Covington Road, Coverdale Road, Cone Road, Bush Road, Dunkley Road, Leicester Road, and Jones Bridge Road, serving approximately 137 residential, commercial, and agricultural properties.

The maximum project cost is \$6,971,000, of which \$4,879,700 is anticipated from a New York State EFC Water Infrastructure Access (WIA) grant, and \$2,091,300 is to be financed through a low-interest USDA Rural Development loan. The anticipated annual cost to a typical property is \$1,200.27 on a benefit basis, inclusive of debt service and water usage charges. The estimated one-time hookup fee is \$3,750, covering service line installation (approximately \$3,000), a \$250 Livingston County Water and Sewer Authority permitting and inspection fee, and \$500 for well isolation and interior plumbing modifications. Because the anticipated cost per typical property falls below the threshold set by the New York State Comptroller for similar districts, Comptroller approval is not required.

d. Resolution 0502-2026 – Vote to Form West Town Water District – Roll Call Vote

Councilmember Gerald Hull moved to adopt Resolution 0502-2026, establishing the Town of Leicester West Town Water District. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Karen Roffe. Upon roll call vote: Councilmember Karen Roffe — Yes; Councilmember Matt Durbin — Yes; Councilmember Gerald Hull — Yes; Councilmember Jason Yasso — Yes; Town Supervisor Richard White — Yes. Motion Passed 5-0.

Attorney Campbell congratulated the Board on formally establishing the district. He outlined next steps: engagement of bond counsel to prepare a bond resolution authorizing project financing, followed by a resolution authorizing submission of the WIA grant application. Attorney Campbell and Jason Molino discussed the likely grant submission timeline, with both agreeing that a deadline before the end of June is unlikely given the ongoing state budget process, and that July is a more realistic target. Attorney Campbell emphasized that the bond resolution authorizes borrowing authority but does not obligate the town to borrow immediately, providing maximum flexibility in the event of grant delays.

Financial Impact & Community Benefit

The West Town Water District represents a total maximum project expenditure of \$6,971,000. Of that, \$4,879,700 (approximately 70 percent) is expected to come from a New York State EFC Water Infrastructure Access grant, with the remaining \$2,091,300 financed through a low-interest USDA Rural Development loan — meaning no direct property tax burden and no upfront capital requirement from the town's general fund. Costs to property owners are structured as a recurring annual benefit assessment of \$1,200.27 per equivalent dwelling unit, plus a one-time hookup fee of \$3,750. The district has been in development since at least 2024, and formal establishment now positions the town to move immediately into the grant application phase. The concrete community benefit is reliable public water service to approximately 137 residential, commercial, and agricultural properties along nine rural roads in the western part of town that currently rely on private wells. The bond resolution and grant application will serve as the primary oversight instruments going forward.

6. Correspondence

a. Village of Leicester – Concert Series

Town Supervisor Richard White informed the Board that a request had been received from the Billy Blasters for the town's financial contribution to the upcoming Village of Leicester Concert Series. He noted that the anticipated contribution is approximately \$1,700, somewhat higher than the \$1,500 contributed the prior year. Supervisor White expressed a preference to structure the contribution as matching support — up to a set amount, covering half the cost — rather than issuing a full check upfront, so as to protect the town in the event of cancellations. No formal action was taken; the Board agreed to address this at the next regular meeting.

7. Highway Department

a. Grader: Mini Bid – Three Responses – One Bid

Town Attorney James Campbell explained the background leading to this resolution. After the Board had agreed in principle to purchase a grader, Attorney Campbell determined that the dollar amount involved was sufficient to trigger the town's competitive procurement requirements under New York State law. Working with Town Supervisor Richard White and Highway Superintendent Russell Page, specifications were developed, and the purchase was put out to mini-bid. Three inquiries were received, but only one responsive bid came in — from Martin Equipment of Illinois — for a 2014 John Deere Model 672G with a 14-foot moldboard at a price of \$172,500 (reflecting a \$2,500 upgrade from the standard 12-foot to a 14-foot moldboard). Attorney Campbell noted that Martin Equipment cooperated by holding the unit during the procurement process, understanding that the town might have been obligated to accept a competing bid if one materialized. No competing bid did. Attorney Campbell characterized the result as expected given the limited availability of comparable equipment; alternative units found on the market were either older or significantly more expensive — in some cases double the price.

b. Resolution 0503-2026 – Authorize the Purchase of Grader from Martin Equipment – Roll Call Vote

Councilmember Karen Roffe moved to adopt Resolution 0503-2026, authorizing the purchase of a 2014 John Deere Model 672G grader with a 14-foot moldboard from Martin Equipment at a price of \$172,500. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Matthew Durbin. Upon roll call vote: Councilmember Karen Roffe — Yes; Councilmember Matt Durbin — Yes; Councilmember Gerald Hull — Yes; Councilmember Jason Yasso — Yes; Town Supervisor Richard White — Yes. Motion Passed 5-0.

Financial Impact & Community Benefit

The purchase of the grader is a one-time capital expenditure of \$172,500, funded through the town's highway budget. The price reflects a \$2,500 upgrade for a 14-foot moldboard over the standard 12-foot configuration, which better suits the town's road maintenance needs. The competitive mini-bid process was required by New York State procurement law at this dollar threshold; while three parties were solicited, only Martin Equipment submitted a responsive bid. Market research conducted during the process confirmed this was a competitive price, with comparable units found at prices as high as double the purchase amount. The practical benefit to residents is continued reliable road grading and maintenance capability for the town's highway department.

8. Executive Session

No executive session was held.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Matthew Durbin and seconded by Councilmember Karen Roffe. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned.