

Annual Town Meeting
Monday, March 2, 2026
7:00 PM
HUB Auditorium

Dan McKinley called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. He led the assembly to join in the Pledge of Allegiance. Dan reviewed the governance of the state law in Robert's Rules of Order. Representative Kirk White was present and shared the highlights of what was happening in Montpelier.

Article 1. To elect a moderator for the ensuing year. Martha Slater nominated Dan McKinley. Judy Jensen seconded the nomination. No further nominations. Dan McKinley was nominated by voice vote. Dan asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Dan McKinley to serve a 1-year term as moderator.

Article 2. To elect all Town Officers required by law:

1. Selectboard member~3-year term: Kevin Dougherty nominated Mary Fratini. Tara Murray nominated Alvina Risinger-Harvey. No further nominations. Both nominees spoke. Mary Fratini shared a few words about herself. She moved here 5 years ago and bought the old Marsh Farm on Route 100. She has been involved with the Park House as well as White River Valley Players, Valley HUB and most recently serving on the Planning Commission. She grew up in Springfield, VT and lived in Barre/Montpelier for about 10 years. She is intensely dedicated to our community of 1,000 people and would love the chance to serve on the selectboard. Alvina shared that she has been a resident of Rochester for over 30 years. She has volunteered on many committees outside the community and for the community. She is currently the chair of the White River Conservation District and has been involved there for 10 years. She said if elected she would do her very best to represent the town folks of Rochester. Voting moved to paper ballot vote. Votes counted on the checklist and paper ballot were both 100. Mary Fratini received 81 votes; Alvina Harvey received 19 votes.

2. Lister~3-year term: Becky Donnet nominated Louis Donnet. Second from the floor. Louis Donnet was nominated by voice vote. Dan asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Louis Donnet for a 3-year term.

3. Collector of Delinquent Taxes. ~1-year term: Nancy Woolley nominated Kristen LaPell. Seconded from the floor. No further nominations. Kristen LaPell won by voice vote. Dan McKinley asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Kristen LaPell for a 1-year term.

4. Library Trustee~5-year term: Barb Shenton nominated Vincent Martinez. Seconded from the floor. No further nominations. Vincent Martinez won by voice vote. Dan McKinley asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Vincent Martinez for a 5-year term.

5. Library Trustee-2-year term: Barb Shenton nominated Melody Balzcon. Seconded from the floor. No further nominations. Melody Balzcon won by voice vote. Dan McKinley asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Melody Balzcon for a 2-year term.

6. Trustee of Public Funds~3-year term: Mike Harvey shared a few departing words about his 30-year position on the Board of Trustees and the history behind the formation of the Trustees of Public Funds board. The town applauded Mike for his years of service. Mike nominated Greg White. Seconded from the floor. Greg White won by voice vote. Dan McKinley asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Greg White for a 3-year term.

7. Cemetery Commissioner~5-year term: Tom Paquette nominated Joe Schenkman. Seconded from the floor. Joe Schenkman won by voice vote. Dan Mckinley asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Joe Schenkman for a 5-year term.

Article 3. Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect current taxes, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. §4791? Sandy Haas moved the article. Judy Jensen seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Article 3 passes.

Article 4. Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes in four (4) installments, with due dates being Monday, August 17, 2026; Monday, November 16, 2026; Tuesday, February 16, 2027, and Monday, May 17, 2027, by physical delivery to tax collector before 5:00 PM on those dates with postmarks not accepted as proof of delivery? Cari Burkard moved the article. Robin Bebo-Long second the motion. There was no discussion. Article 4 passes.

Article 5. Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,577,803 of which \$1,230,490 shall be raised by taxes? Pat moved the article. Chad seconded the motion. Pat moved to amend Article 5 because of a formula error in the budget spreadsheet which omitted \$500 from the total budget calculation. She proposed to move Article 5 as follows: “Shall the voters authorized total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,578,303 of which \$1,230,990 shall be raised by taxes?” Barb seconded the motion. No debate on the article. Closed discussion. Amendment voted and passed. Mike moved to amend the amendment to include an appropriation for the HUB’s operation expenses of \$43,516, which was mistakenly not included in the total budget calculation. Therefore, move the article a second time as follows “Shall the voters authorized total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,621,819 of which \$1,274,506 shall be raised by taxes?” Cari Burkard seconded the motion. Mike explained further that the appropriation the town gives to fund a portion of the Hub operation expense is clearly identified on page 36 of the town report. This is just an error that the amount was left out of the budget calculations. For accounting purposes, the expenditure will be inserted into the FY27 budget found on page 39 of your Town Report under the line-item for heat, which is an active line item and acceptable approach. It should also be noted that we previously recorded that the total impact on your taxes is an increase of 3.27%. While the \$43,516 wasn’t included in the budget calculation, it was included in the impact on your taxes. The figure that we previously noted of a tax increase of 3.27% will stand correct with this amended amendment. Vic spoke as the President of Valley Hub Inc., the non-profit created to develop and manage the building under the supervision of the selectboard. He made a few comments about the amendment and would offer answers to any questions that may come up. The figure of \$43,516 is a reduction of \$9,000 from the request in the current fiscal year. The total budget for operating the HUB in the two fiscal years is about \$100,000. The Town appropriation is roughly 40% of the HUB’s operating budget. The rest comes from voluntary

donations from fees to users of the building like White River Valley Players, Suzuki week, and others, as well as RSUD who use the building for music and art for the children. He added he wanted to frame the project as an opportunity to convert liability to an asset. He shared the history of the high school ending in 2018 and the building becoming a liability to the combined schools. He shared how the town took ownership of the high school building in 2025. He said whether it was under the ownership of the school board or the town, we the residents of Rochester bear that responsibility for the liability of the building. He shared currently the plan in motion is to get it developed, renovated, to have rent paying tenants in order to convert this liability into an asset again for the town. There are two major challenges that are to complete the funding necessary to renovate the classroom end of the building estimated at 5.2 million dollars. The first challenge he noted was they have secured 75% of the funding for the project. The second challenge is to secure rental spaces to pay for the operational expenses which include a childcare center. The budget amendment before you is for year 1 of a 5-year plan to get to a position where the building will be self-sufficient financially. Alvina made a motion to table Article 5 until all articles are voted. Drew Hudson spoke and said in the past we didn't go back in after the following articles were voted to add them in. Larry Straus spoke and said the delay is unnecessary since we know all the proposed appropriations and voted articles are a total of \$119,164 so that is the maximum amount that can be added. The total potential is quite known dollar-wise. Mary reminded us that last year the appropriations were doubled and passed and we didn't go back and change the numbers for the total expenditures. Based on what we did last year, everything after article 5 is separate from that general fund total. The motion went to vote to table Article 5 until after Article 13 and motion did not pass. The amended amendment went to vote and passed as follows: Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of **\$1,621,819** of which **\$1,274,506** shall be raised by taxes?". Article 5 passes as amended. Burleigh Griffith moved to amend the amended amendment asking to remove the amount of \$32,500 from the Windsor County Sheriff budget line. He felt the money was not useful. He felt we already fell under the jurisdiction of the Sheriffs and the Police. The extra amount paid to the Windsor County Sheriffs could be better spent on other town projects or added back into the general funds as a surplus. The amended amendment was seconded. The article would then read "Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of **\$1,589,319** of which **\$1,242,006** shall be raised by taxes? Brenda Goupee asked the selectboard if they had any information about how often the Sheriffs come to Rochester and what kind of service we should expect from them. Pat answered that the Windsor County Sheriff's department covers Rochester with two 4-hour shifts every week. They piggyback with surrounding towns to keep travel costs down. She said the shifts are staggered at their discretion. They bill us monthly and they send us their hours, and any tickets issued during their time in Rochester. The office has invoices if anyone would like to see them. Pat said we didn't want to be one of the towns known for speed control. She said we could increase our parameters. Pat said she is not aware of the State Police patrolling town roads. Pat said when the Sheriffs are in town on patrol they will check in with the Town Office. She said they will fulfill requests for events. Dane Cooley asked if Pat could share the parameters with the Sheriff and the town. Pat said we signed a contract with them, and it can be found at the town clerk's office. Alvina asked if we knew how much money does come back to the town for tickets. Pat said about 10-15% of what we paid on their contract. Doon shared in the past two years in the town report it shows income from the sheriff by bringing in \$5,000 and this year anticipating only \$1,000 so that indicates that is not the intention of what they are hired to do. He said it was an agreement not to ticket

someone unless they are going 10 miles over the speed limit. Kathryn shared the presence of law enforcement and its impact on the roads is an important factor. Rob Gardner said if it were up to him, he would have 3 shifts going with all the speeding going on in town. He said he does see the Sheriffs pull people over. Question called. No further discussion. Dan read the amended article “Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,589,319 of which \$1,242,006 shall be raised by taxes?” The amendment didn’t carry. Back to the amended article. “Shall the votes authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of **\$1,621,819** of which **\$1,274,506** shall be raised by taxes?” Amended Article 5 passes as amended.

Article 6. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow money in anticipation of taxes? Judy Jensen moved the article. Sandy Haas seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Article 6 passes.

Article 7. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow an amount not to exceed \$156,200 for the purchase of a Dodge Ram 5500 for the Highway? Mike Harvey moved the article, and Barb DeHart seconded the motion. Larry Plesent asked what kind of truck it was. Pat said it will be a plow truck. The question was asked what year the truck is. Pat said it is 2026. Pat said the price includes the Truck and outfitting the truck. There was no further discussion. Article 7 passes.

Article 8. Shall the voters appropriate \$53,883 towards operating expenses of the Rochester Public Library? Cari Burkard moved the article. Linda Crosby seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Article 8 passes.

Article 9. Shall the voters appropriate \$21,491 to continue funding recycling with North Star Rubbish Removal LLC from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027? Martha Slater moved the article, and Cari Burkardt seconded the motion. Deb Moore made a comment that the appropriation has not increased in several years. The couple that does the recycling and garbage do it with such enthusiasm. She asked that we give them a raise. They have only increased \$71 in 3 years. Julie shared that North Star has a contract with the town, and they recently submitted a letter asking for an increase. The increase amount was \$89, and the increase would be \$1080 to the current contract amount. Deb made a motion to abide by North Star’s request to an increase of \$1068 for the year making the increase from \$21,491 to \$22,559. Motion was seconded from the floor. Dan read the amended article “Shall the voters appropriate \$22,559 to continue funding recycling with North Star Rubbish Removal LLC from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027?” Doon made a comment to encourage anyone using the recycling to sort out the refundable bottles and cans on the side of the parking lot. That has turned out to be a great way to fund extra projects around town. No further discussion. Article 9 passes as amended.

Article 10. Shall the voters approve of the transfer of any remaining FY27 Fire Department budgeted funds at the end of the fiscal year to the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund? Mike Harvey moved the article, and Tim Crowley seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Article 10 passes.

Article 11. Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000 to the Tennis Reserve Fund? Cari Burkard moved the article, and Tara Murray seconded the motion. No discussion. Article 11 passes.

Article 12. Shall the voters appropriate \$20,000 to the Highway Grant Projects Reserve Fund? Martha moved the article, and Asia seconded the motion. No discussion. Article 12 passes.

Article 13. Shall the voters vote to appropriate the following sums as requested by these community agencies:

Central VT Council on Aging	\$ 3,000.00
Clara Martin Center	\$ 2,066.00
Green Up Vermont	\$ 100.00
Orange County Parent Child Center	\$ 300.00
Quintown Community Center	\$ 9,849.00
Safeline, Inc	\$ 250.00
Tri-Valley Transport	\$ 1,300.00
VNH-Visiting Nurse Association	\$ 4,800.00
White River Partnership	\$ 875.00
ATRIA f/k/a WomanSafe	\$ 250.00

Total **\$22,790.00**

Tim Crowley moved the article, and Linda Crosby seconded the motion. No discussion. Article 13 passes.

Article 14 To transact any other legal and proper business to be brought before said meeting. Larry Plesent let the floor know he stepped down as the Emergency Management Director and Regional Emergency Management Coordinator. He said if there is anyone out there that is interested in these positions to reach out. Chad Richardson stepped up to fill his shoes. Pat said the appointments will be at the next selectboard meeting to be held next Monday. Mary Alice Bisbee mentioned that it would be nice to have this meeting during the day on Town Meeting Day and how difficult it is for the elderly to get out. She said she is working with the League of Women Voters, of which she is a member and is trying to get people to vote by Australian ballot. She suggested to the selectboard how an Australian ballot would be helpful. The motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Julie Smith