

Town of Wilmington
2025 Annual Town Meeting Held in the Gym at Old School Enrichment Center (OSEC)
Minutes
March 4, 2025 – 10:00am

Tom Fitzgerald began by reading Article 1.

Article 1: Shall the town vote to appoint a moderator for the 2025 Annual Town Meeting?

He called for a vote – the Ayes had it, Robert “Bob” Fisher was asked to step in as Town Moderator.

Bob called the meeting to order at 10:02m and recognized Scouts Daltyn Hurley and Michael Culnen from Scout Troop #461 to post the colors and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was then suspended for updates from the following legislators: Senator Seth Bongartz, Senator Rob Plunkett, and Representative Emily Carris-Duncan.

Discussion: Governor’s Education Proposal, 1/3 of Vermont’s Budget is Federal dollars, Agricultural Committee, Institutions Committee, Commerce & Economic Development Committee, Career & Technical Education, adult education, insurances, small business creation, Bill 91, Workplace Development Office, Medicare – only two options in Vermont, Vermont is so small, need more housing to attract larger population, affordability before housing, property taxes too high, Vermont is population of Boston spread across the state, looking at what costs insurance companies need to operate, high premium cost & deductible, competition is gone within the market – only two providers, cut out middle man and pay hospital directly, direct pay is worth looking into, like to see our communities provide aging in place, services not in this valley and not replicated elsewhere, will look into Wilmington being lost in the middle, need more alignment of services, big thank you to the road crew.

Moderator Robert Fisher announced that the polls are open in the Community Room for the Articles being acted on by Australian Ballot, to please silence cell phones, and introductions were made of the front table.

In attendance were Selectboard Members Charlie Foster, Tony Tribuno, Vince Rice, Tom Fitzgerald; Town Clerk Therese Lounsbury; Town Manager Scott Tucker; Finance Officer Christine Richter; Highway Supervisor Marshall Dix; Fire Chief Scott Moore; Police Chief Matt Murano, and approximately 92 voters.

The moderator shared that he would be following Roberts Rules of Order, how amendments to a motion will work, that all questions should be directed through the moderator, and how to seek a paper ballot. Articles will be addressed and read as they come before the floor. The moderator also asked whether there were any objections to allowing the non-voting members of the town’s administration to speak during the meeting. There were no objections. Bob began by reading the opening statement of the 2025 Warning.

The legal voters of the Town of Wilmington are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Old School Community Center (OSEC) in said Wilmington, Vermont, at 10 A.M. on Tuesday, March 04, 2025, to consider and act on the following articles not involving voting by Australian Ballot. (Voting for all Australian Ballot articles will be held at the OSEC in said Wilmington, Vermont, on March 4, 2025, from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm.)

Article 2: To elect all Town and Town School District Officers required by law AND Shall the Town vote to rescind the operation of licensed cannabis retailers and integrated licensees, except for those licensed cannabis retailers and integrated licensees, operating at the time of any rescission, pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863(a)(2) (Australian Ballot -Polls open 7:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M.)

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to accept the Town Report.

Motion to approve as read, made by Tom Fitzgerald and seconded by Cliff Duncan.

Debate (including but not limited to): nice changes, items easier to find, Scott Tucker recognized Jessica DeFrancesco Archambault’s work on the Town Report, thank you for the dedication to John Barker Willard, if

everything approved – what type of tax rate, Route 9 Sewer/Water extension – what status, cost, any chance of grants expiring, expansion is still underway, working on easements, have to do study for artifacts, permitting in progress, anticipate going out to bid this year, do their best to stay within budget.

Speakers: Cliff Duncan, Scott Tucker, Barker Willard

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 4: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,625,986 to care for the expenses and liabilities of the General Fund for fiscal year 2026 (7/1/25 to 6/30/2026)?

Motion to approve as read, made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate (including but not limited to): (page 25, line 266) what are the changes with Public Lands & Fences; working on plan for Lake Raponda Dam (acquired 1992) because of elevated interest at the state level, working on maintenance plan and in anticipation of rising costs have placed some monies in that capital account; (page 18) Social Services figure – where is the full listing; Social Services are asked to come in and present to the Selectboard; amount of that line has grown quite a bit – might be worth a good look; might want to consider a donation in another manner to reduce the tax rate, suggesting a voluntary donation pool; General Fund – employee salary increase of 5% - some large – are these catching up; have caught up with salary ranges that we compete with and hoping to maintain good staff, trying to be fair to tax payers too; police sworn payroll increase of \$100,000 (page 20); number of changes – were fully staffed and since lost employees to neighboring towns, looked at starting pay rate for officers – we were \$20-25,000 behind – were unable to bring in candidates, have a small applicant pool, have a residency requirement to keep costs down by having officers on-call instead of 24-hour coverage, added School Resource Officer (SRO) that is shared cost with the schools, we spend time training officers and they can move on; (page 23) increase in retirement line, State of Vermont retirement program is rate set by the state for what the town must contribute; library increase – have never provided benefits, but need to get competitive; Local Option Tax (page 15-16) – how does usage track, who decides use; Selectboard decides use, the meeting date also lists what project, “Estate” was part of sewer dispute with Wilmington White House; why don’t we see the audit report, it is a separate report too big for the Town Report but can be made available online; need more explanation or better layout for the 1% Local Option Tax use; East Main Street sidewalk and sewer money, part of the delay is easements along the stretch, how to go out to bid this year, have to correct wastewater lines that run from basement to basement, money set aside to allow loan to homeowners and completion.

Speakers: Nicki Steel, Scott Tucker, Cliff Duncan, Christine Richter, Chief Matthew Murano, Carolyn Palmer, Carol DeBarba, Barker Willard

Motion made to call the question and end debate made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Helen Staib.

Voice Vote: ***Motion to cease debate carried.***

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 5: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,847,744 to care for the expenses and liabilities of the Town Road Budget for fiscal year 2026 (7/1/25 to 6/30/2026)?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 6: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$4,000 to Southeast Vermont Transit/The MOOover whose purpose is to provide year-round public transit services in Windham and southern Windsor counties?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Charlie Foster, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): concerns over federal and state cuts, have adjusted routes, keep expenses down, Mount Snow and condo associations have helped to generate local match to grants, have been able to remain fare free, ½ million rides annually, rides for 60+ and disabled to get to appointments, volunteers drive many of the appointments, 79,000 riders annually on the fixed routes; MOOover picks up students to help coordinate after school activities; have to anticipate that this cost will grow – the free fare may have to go, the MOOover property is not on the tax roll, people are now skirting paying for parking at Mount Snow by placing

cars somewhere and riding MOOver; the request for \$4,000 is a steal for a full transportation system around the valley; create a MOOver pass, could ask for 1% Local Option Tax monies; if collect fare will have that amount deducted from grants for the following year; it is usable service but could be better way to fund; money collected in fares and determine half to deduct from grant, have to then buy collection units for each bus and pay someone to count the money.

Speakers: Keith Johnson, Helen Staib, Cliff Duncan, Tom Fitzgerald, Barker Willard

Motion made to call the question and end debate made by Helen Staib, seconded by Brian Lynch.

Voice Vote: ***Motion to cease debate carried.***

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 7: Shall the Town vote to allocate the State per parcel payment estimated to be \$26,962 to the Reappraisal Reserve Fund?

Motion to allocate as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): what is it; reserve funds for conducting town reappraisals.

Speakers: Carol DeBarba, Christine Richter

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 8: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$255,000 to fund the Highway Town Road Equipment Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 9: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$160,000 to fund the Bridge Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 10: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund Highway Building Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 11: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$265,000 to fund the Fire Department Equipment Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): emergency vehicle (ambulance) went to 60-foot roadway incline but could not make it up, person carried from house a length because of the lack of 4-wheel drive or chains, can identify what roads would be difficult for emergency vehicles; fire equipment chained up, never been unable to get to a call.

Speakers: John Quigley, Fire Chief Scott Moore

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 12: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$60,000 to fund the Police Equipment Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 13: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Old Fire House Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): know that there are good services in the building, but who is paying for it, time to get rid of it; we currently rent one bay, concept to have a community wellness space and that space could offer a solution for Seniors, people in recovery, the building is easy access to other services like food distribution, costs under \$15,000 a year to operate, available as a community resource, have made energy savings maintenance to the building.

Speakers: Helen Staib, Scott Tucker

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Voter attendance at 11:57am was approximately 81.

Article 14: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Memorial Hall Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 15: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$12,000 to fund the Library Capital Reserve Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 16: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Town Hall Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): for maintenance or replacement and movement of the building? For maintaining the building – had an amount to do painting and repair some siding, replaced windows with help of a carpenter on the road crew, will not be tapped for funding a new building.

Speakers: Cliff Duncan, Scott Tucker

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 17: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$5,000 to fund the Transfer Station Capital Fund?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): has been good to keep the area clean without the bins and in general a pleasant experience.

Speakers: Nicki Steel

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 18: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$80,000 to fund the Public Lands Fences Capital Fund and for the purpose of construction and maintenance on Lake Raponda Dam?

Motion to raise and appropriate as read, made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): \$80k is going to be used to re-do the dam or for whatever has to be done to make the dam pass muster with the State; should have cost estimate by April, will come back to raise amount when there is a true estimate; voting this amount twice since already in the budget? Not voting twice – already has a placeholder in the General Fund for presenting overall budget figure.

Speakers: Cliff Duncan, Nicki Steel

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 19: Shall the voters authorize payment of real property taxes in two installments, with the due dates being August 29, 2025, and February 27, 2026, by delivery to Town Hall by 4:30 p.m. on the due date or postmarked on or before the due date?

Motion to authorize as read, made by Vince Rice, seconded by Charlie Foster.

Debate (including but not limited to): None

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 20: Shall the Town allow for the election of a nonresident of the Town, to the position of Town Moderator, so long as that person is a resident of the State of Vermont, pursuant to 17 VSA 2646a?

Motion to allow as read, made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): can it be amended to say “only if it is Bob Fisher”?

Speakers: Carol DeBarba

Voice Vote: ***Motion carried.***

Article 21: To transact any non-binding business.

Motion made by Cliff Duncan and seconded by Bill Adams, to see if the Town of Wilmington voters will direct the Selectboard to explore

- 1. Removing from the Wilmington General Fund, all future funded entities who are listed as “Social Service Organizations Budgeted Requests” (page 18 of this year’s annual report) and are not part of any official town department.***
- 2. Explore creating and managing a separate voluntary funding mechanism to manage and collect such funds by our Town Treasurer. All funds collected would be distributed at one time annually to such entities on a shared basis.***
- 3. Such a change would have no impact or affect on these entities as listed and funded for the fiscal year 2026.***

Debate (including but not limited to): a handout was distributed on a funding change for Social Services with public input, perhaps mailing to solicit funds, potential to raise more funds for these services, would incur an administrative cost, the town would administer and manage the process; I’d like to point out that we live as a community, govern ourselves as a community – but we all need to recognize that the economic capitalist system that we live under has progressively squeezed ever more of us out of the ability to participate in that capitalistic system – and I think we would be better off directing our attention to making some changes on that level and not punishing those of us who live here that want to keep a community based system welcoming and available to all of us; savings is only about \$.01 to pull these out; way for community to own it and support it; in addition to these worthwhile services – get others that contact him, it will be too many hands out; agree in principal but disconnect on how or why our tow officials are in a position to do it; town offers structure, has mailing ability, has an accounting piece and more marketing potential; community first and community first is person to person not administrative and I think as a community by having this the way it is – we are saying “that’s what matters” and I really hope for all of our benefit that is what matters; these services do their own mailings, etc., and would not be asking for money if it wasn’t needed – all the contact information for these entities are in the Town Report for you to reach out; town already is managing these as our voice.

Speakers: Cliff Duncan, Ann Manwaring, Tom Fitzgerald, Elizabeth McEwen, Carol DeBarba, Bob McConnin, Gary Henry

Motion made to call the question and end debate made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Vince Rice.

Voice Vote: ***Motion to cease debate carried.***

Voice Vote: ***Motion defeated.***

Tom Fitzgerald shared that it was the tenth anniversary of John Gannon sitting on the Board - in fact he has been the Vice Chairman for some time - but this was his last year, and I want to take this time to thank John for all his time. He’s been involved in just about everything in town here at this point. There are some non-elected positions that he will be re-appointed to, but I want to thank him dearly because he has helped us out quite a bit over these past ten years.

Friends of Pettee Memorial Library drew tickets for their two basket raffles with the following winners:

Basket #1 – Carolyn Palmer

Basket #2 – Kathleen Santosuosso

Hearing no other business, the moderator entertained a motion to recess the floor meeting and move to the voting by Australian Ballot.

Motion to adjourn made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Adjourned at 12:29pm.

TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF, THESE MINUTES ARE A TRUE AND OFFICIAL RECORD OF ALL ACTION TAKEN AT THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD, MARCH 4, 2025.

ATTEST: _____

Therese M. Lounsbury, Wilmington Town Clerk

ATTEST: _____

Robert Fisher, Moderator

DATE: _____

ATTEST: _____

Tom Fitzgerald, Selectboard Chair

DATE: _____

ATTEST: _____

Bonnie Lorimer, Justice of Peace

DATE: _____