ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Saturday, March 1, 2025 - Woodbury Elementary School Gym

Town Moderator Stephen Murphy calls the meeting to order at 10:05 A.M. We recite the Pledge of Allegiance, then hold a moment of silence to remember our neighbors, friends, and family who passed away this past year. Moderator reviews four points of order – rules, articles, debate, voting – based on Vermont Law and Robert's Rules of Order. One attendee who is not a Woodbury registered voter identifies herself; voters welcome her; Moderator reminds her that she may not vote, and unless permitted by the assembly, may not speak in debate.

Moderator states that he has previously publicly announced that he would accept a nomination to be re-elected moderator; therefore, to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, he yields the podium to the Select Board to preside over Article 1. Diana Peduzzi (Select Board Chair) presides.

Article 1: Who shall be elected moderator?
Paul Cerutti nominates Stephen Murphy. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Diana declares that Stephen is elected. Voters applaud. Stephen returns to the podium to moderate the meeting.

Article 2: To consider the printed Woodbury Town Report for the year ending December 31, 2024.
Darren Usinowicz moves the article; Ward (Skip) Marchesani seconds. Darren – who is one of the two Woodbury representatives to Mountain View Union Elementary School District – gives the following update on the District: Heather Meacham was recently voted in as the second Woodbury representative (voters applaud); the School Board recently voted to locate a state-funded pre-kindergarten program, including transportation, at Lakeview School; construction of the Woodbury Elementary School (WES) outdoor classroom is expected to begin this Summer; the project to replace the WES fire escape is in progress; hopefully this year a well will be dug to provide drinking water to WES; on Town Meeting Day, voters will consider whether to approve a bond to remediate Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and to improve energy efficiency at Hardwick Elementary School; and to improve communication with constituents, Darren will provide School District updates by monthly reports at Select Board meetings, and by posts on Front Porch Forum; and he welcomes questions or comments by phone, email, or in-person. Voters applaud.

Christopher (Chris) Casey (Select Board member) highlights page 3 of the Town Report — Dedication to Brandy Smith, Town Treasurer, 2014 – 2025. On behalf of the Town and Select Board, Chris thanks and gives flowers to Brandy for her years of service (she is stepping down with one year left of her three-year term). Voters applaud in a standing ovation.
Michael Gray expresses his appreciation for longtime resident Vail Leach who passed away this past year. Voters applaud.

John Reid (Woodbury representative to CVFiber) gives an update on CVFiber's progress: CVFiber is a non-profit internet fiber company owned by Woodbury and 80 other central and northeastern Vermont towns; CVFiber plans to offer service to 750 addresses in Woodbury; currently, service is available to 450 addresses; by the end of 2025, service will be available to 75 more addresses; for the 230 remaining addresses (mostly along Route 14, Cabot Road, and West Woodbury), CVFiber seeks funding to make the service available. Goddard Graves asks when the concrete pad for the substation near Sand Hill Road will be poured. John states that the pad will be poured after Winter, and the service should be available by the end of 2025. By unanimous consent, discussion ends.

Article 3: Who shall be elected to fill the following positions as Town Officers?

Town Clerk – 3 years: Andi Rosin nominates Robin Durkee; Ellie Hayes seconds. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Robin is elected. Voters applaud.

Town Treasurer (One year remaining on a 3-year term) – 1 year: Brandy Smith nominates Lillian Baron. Lillian introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Lillian is elected. Voters applaud.

Select Board Member – 3 years: John Reid nominates Diana Peduzzi. Diana introduces her candidacy. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Paul Cerutti moves to direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Diana; Jonah Meacham seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the motion is passed. The Clerk casts one ballot for Diana who thereby is elected. Voters applaud.

Lister – 3 years: Bonnie Collins nominates Sara Hedrick. Sara introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Paul Cerutti moves to direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Sara; Bonnie Collins seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the motion is passed. The Clerk casts one ballot for Sara who thereby is elected. Voters applaud.

Auditor – 3 years: Retta Dunlap nominates John Reid; Patrick Flood seconds. John introduces his candidacy. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Paul Cerutti moves to direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for John; Jonah Meacham seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the motion is passed. The Clerk casts one ballot for John who thereby is elected. Voters applaud.

Collector of Delinquent Taxes – 1 year: Robin Durkee nominates Brandy Smith; John Reid seconds. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Brandy is elected. Voters applaud.

Cemetery Commissioner – 5 years: Carolyn Stewart nominates Patricia (Patti) Garbeck; Carol Ray seconds. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Patti is elected. Voters applaud.

Library Trustee – 3 years: Elisha Renne nominates Kymberly Winchell; Carol Ray seconds. Kymberly introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Kymberly is elected. Voters applaud.

Library Trustee – 3 years: Deanna (Dede) Avery nominates David Barber. David introduces his candidacy. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that David is elected. Voters applaud.

Library Trustee – 3 years: Sara VanHof nominates Tepin Delaney. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Tepin is elected. Voters applaud.

Skip Marchesani expresses thanks to Library Director Myrna Miranda-O'Neill, Assistant Librarian Jacob Bruccoli-Langlois, Library Board of Trustees Chair Dede Avery, and the other Library Trustees, for work well done. Voters applaud.

Hazen Union School District Director – 3 years: Chris Casey nominates Laura Murphy. Moderator states that Laura is his wife; to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, he yields the podium to the Select Board to preside over the election. Select Board Chair Diana Peduzzi presides. No other candidates are nominated. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Diana declares that Laura is elected. Voters applaud. Moderator returns to the podium.

Article 4: Shall the Town have its taxes paid to the Town Treasurer, as tax receiver, 60 days after tax bills are mailed (estimated due date to be Oct 30, 2025)? Taxes would then become delinquent and turned over to the Collector of Delinquent Taxes for collection with a penalty that increases by ½ percent per month of delinquency to a maximum of 6 percent for one full year or more of delinquency, and interest of 6 percent per year or ½ percent per month.

Ellie Hayes moves the article; Bonnie Collins seconds. Darren Usinowicz asks if the ½ percent is a standard rate used by every town. Diana Peduzzi states that the ½ percent was approved by Woodbury voters in a previous election. Michael Gray also states that the ½ percent was previously approved by voters; it has been a standard part of the Town Meeting warning for many years; and the language hasn't changed at all. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

Article 5: Shall the voters appropriate $22,350.00 for the support of the Woodbury Community Library?
Darren Usinowicz moves the article; Chris Koteas seconds. Darren states that the amount requested does not seem to be enough. Sasha McGarvey states that our Library is severely underfunded – by approximately $80,000.00 – compared to nearby small libraries, especially regarding salary and book collection development; she encourages more support for our Library. Sara VanHof (Library Trustee) asks whether those other libraries are open part-time like our own, or full-time which would require higher salaries? Also, Sara states that the Library Board of Trustee does its best to keep costs down while providing as much service as possible. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

Cindy Gordon invites a Library Trustee to provide information on the upcoming Pie Breakfast. Sara VanHof explains that the event – which is the library's major annual fundraiser – will be held on March 22 with a weather date of March 23. Additionally, later in the year the library will publish a Woodbury Town Cookbook to raise funds. Voters applaud.

Article 6: Shall the voters appropriate $10,000.00 for the support of the Woodbury Cemeteries?
Bill Condon moves the article; Paul Cerutti seconds. Bill states that we need to keep the cemeteries in good shape. Susan Stitely (Chair of the Cemetery Commission) states that the Commission manages the five cemeteries in town; in 2024 they surveyed the West Woodbury Cemetery and the green burial section of the South Woodbury Cemetery; she encourages people to consider having a green burial; burial plots can be purchased at the Town Clerk's Office. Carol Ray asks why the amount requested for appropriation is less than the amount requested last year? Susan explains that the Commission has leftover funds from last year and wants to keep the budget more affordable this year. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

Article 7: Shall the town appropriate $14,884.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to be added to the truck replacement fund, paid July 1, 2025?
Bill Condon moves the article; Ellie Hayes seconds. Bill states, "They've helped me several times. And I'm deeply indebted to them." Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

Article 8: Shall the town appropriate $128,324.11 to fund the operations of Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department? The Capital Replacement Fund paid in full by January 1, 2026, in the amount of $33,000.00, and the Operating Expenses of $95,324.11 paid in quarterly installments ($23,831.03) starting July 1, 2025.

Goddard Graves moves the article; Sara VanHof seconds. Goddard thanks the Fire Department for doing a great job. Skip Marchesani relates a personal story and thanks the Fire Dept. for their service. Voters applaud. Patrick Flood states that last year at the Town Meeting he learned about the Fire/Rescue team's difficult work in dealing with crimes and drug-related problems in Woodbury. Patrick and a small group of concerned citizens met throughout the year and held a town forum to determine what, if anything, townspeople could do to help address the problem. Near the end of 2024, Paul Cerutti (Fire Chief) informed Patrick that recently the problems had become less severe; as a result, the activity of the concerned citizens dwindled; but Patrick believes that if the problems again become severe, townspeople will again come together to help the Fire Dept. Patrick states how thankful he is for our volunteer Fire Dept. – they give so much to make us safer. Voters applaud. Paul Cerutti gives an update: substance abuse issues ebb and flow – currently they are less severe but problems persist; he encourages residents to report crimes to the police; call volume is trending upward – fire calls are steady, but Fast Squad/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls are increasing due to our older population; the Fire Dept. welcomes new members especially for EMS service, administration, and firehouse tasks. Retta Dunlap (Fire Dept. President) states that the Fire Dept. will consider changing its bylaws to add a new membership class – non-voting members – to enable volunteers to provide support such as truck-checks and food for firefighters. Robin Durkee asks if the new firehouse has a kitchen. Paul replies, Yes, but it is not yet complete. No further questions or comments. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

Article 9: Shall the town appropriate $100,059.24 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to fund the loan payment for the Fire and Emergency Operations Center, paid November 1, 2025?

John Reid moves the article; Bill Condon seconds. John acknowledges Paul Cerutti's several years of intense work – as fire chief, project manager, fundraiser, and ambassador to the town – in getting the new firehouse built; the result looks awesome. Voters applaud. Goddard Graves wants to know, given the current and anticipated instability of interest rates, if we would have to pay more next year to "catch up" with additional costs of rising interest rates. Paul Cerutti answers that currently the Fire Department has a fixed-rate loan from Union Bank set at 5 ½ percent for 10 years, followed by a variable rate. Regarding the long-term plan for the loan, the Fire Dept. intends to seek a fixed-rate municipal bond to be held by the Select Board (this would require voter approval by Australian ballot). Michael Gray asks about the status of the addition to the new firehouse. Paul explains that Senator Bernie Sanders arranged congressional earmark funds for the Fire Dept. Those funds cannot be used to pay for the new firehouse, but they can be used to pay for an addition to the new firehouse. Regarding this proposed 2000 square-foot addition, thus far two environmental studies and state-funded fuel studies have been completed, and geotechnical studies are scheduled. The Fire Dept.'s goal is to not cost the voters any money for the addition. Paul hopes to solicit construction bids this Spring. Diana Peduzzi asks how secure they feel about getting the federal money. Paul states that he spoke to the regional director of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) who believes that the money is secure; the funding is included in a law passed by Congress and signed by the President, so it should be all set. Paul states that the Fire Dept. does not intend to come back to the voters for more money. Carol Ray asks if the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will buy the old firehouse and convert the site into green space. Paul explains that the Fire Dept, in cooperation with the Select Board as the applicant, applied in 2023 for a FEMA buyout. John Gordon (Emergency Management Director) further explains that he submitted the Fire Dept.'s application for the buyout through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Program; the application is complete and currently pending. Susan Martin asks how the town will pay for appropriations approved by Articles 7 and 8, when taxes are collected in October. Moderator asks Susan if this question is related to Article 9; Susan says no; without objection, Moderator recognizes Paul to answer Susan's question. Paul states that, if possible, the Fire Dept.

arranges payments to be made in November or later; and based on his prior experience as Select Board member, he believes that the Select Board can use short-term loans or funds from other accounts to pay bills prior to collecting taxes. Skip Marchesani asks if taxes paid this October are for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2025? Brandy Smith answers that taxes are paid for the fiscal year that runs from July 1 to June 30; beginning in July, finances are tight, but the town manages by borrowing against other funds, and collecting delinquent taxes, until tax payments are received. Carol Ray asks what the future for the annex building is and if it is in a flood zone? Paul states that the plan is unknown due to uncertainty whether the town will get the money from USDA, and whether the old firehouse will be functional; potentially the Fire Dept. would move equipment back to the annex which is not in the flood plain. Diana Peduzzi states that, if all goes well, the plan is that the annex will go to the town, and the Select Board will consider ideas for its use. Paul says that the goal of the Fire Dept. is to donate the annex to the town; currently the Fire Dept. is conducting title searches to determine the ownership of buildings. Laura Murphy asks whether the new firehouse is outside the recently flooded areas. Paul states that the firehouse — which was built according to competing permitting interests — is outside but near the edge of the areas that flooded in 2023 and 2024. No further questions or comments. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

Article 10: Shall the voters appropriate $1,626.00 to the Woodbury/Calais Food Shelf?
Skip Marchesani moves to consolidate the voting for Articles 10 – 30. Moderator explains that under Robert's Rules such a series of articles can be moved by a single motion, but any article in the series must be removed and dealt with separately at the demand of one voter. Skip states that his motion stands as explained by Moderator; Jonah Meacham seconds. Moderator states, regarding Article 30, that he is an employee of Washington County Mental Health Services, but he believes that this fact does not pose a conflict of interest, given the scope and budget of the agency; yet if anyone objects, he will step aside and yield the moderating to the Select Board; without objection, Moderator proceeds. Carlotta (Susie) Graves moves to amend Article 10 to state, "Shall the voters appropriate $2,500.00 to the Woodbury/Calais Food Shelf?", due to the price of food and the need of some food shelves to buy food from wholesalers; Skip Marchesani seconds. Carol Ray (Co-Director of the Woodbury/Calais Food Shelf) expresses thanks for the proposed amendment, and for the fairness and generosity of Woodbury and Calais; she states that she uses a formula to determine the appropriation request; last year the Food Shelf received a grant for $18,000.00, and currently it is well funded and does not need the proposed increased appropriation. By unanimous consent, discussion on the amendment ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the motion to amend Article 10 is passed. Skip Marchesani calls the question. Moderator determines that nobody else wants to speak on the question. Skip withdraws his motion. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that Articles 10 - 30 are passed. Voters applaud.

Article 11: Shall the voters appropriate $750.00 to Aid to Women, Men and Children in Abuse and Rape Emergencies (A.W.A.R.E.)?

Article 12: Shall the voters appropriate $250.00 to the American Red Cross of NH/VT?

Article 13: Shall the voters appropriate $600.00 to Central Vermont Adult Basic Education?

Article 14: Shall the voters appropriate $750.00 to the Central Vermont Council on Aging?

Article 15: Shall the voters appropriate $300.00 to the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation?

Article 16: Shall the voters appropriate $2,000.00 to Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice Inc.?

Article 17: Shall the voters appropriate $650.00 to CIRCLE (Battered Women's Services)?

Article 18: Shall the voters appropriate $500.00 to Elevate Youth Services (Washington County Youth Services)?

Article 19: Shall the voters appropriate $100.00 to the Family Center of Washington County?

Article 20: Shall the voters appropriate $484.00 to Green Mountain Transit?

Article 21: Shall the voters appropriate $50.00 to Green Up Vermont?

Article 22: Shall the voters appropriate $750.00 to Hardwick Community Television?

Article 23: Shall the voters appropriate $200.00 to Mosaic VT (Sexual Assault Crisis Team)?

Article 24: Shall the voters appropriate $200.00 to the Our House of Central Vermont?

Article 25: Shall the voters appropriate $100.00 to People's Health and Wellness Clinic?

Article 26: Shall the voters appropriate $500.00 to Rural Community Transportation?

Article 27: Shall the voters appropriate $200.00 to Salvation Farms?

Article 28: Shall the voters appropriate $1,500.00 to Twin Valley Senior Center?

Article 29: Shall the voters appropriate $210.00 to Vermont Center for Independent Living?

Article 30: Shall the voters appropriate $1,000.00 to Washington County Mental Health Services?

Article 31: Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures of $570,426.00 for operating expenses for the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026?

Brandy Smith states that the dollar amount needs to increase to reflect the increased appropriation to the Food Shelf. Moderator explains that this increase would require an amendment to the article, which could occur only after the article is moved. Darren Usinowicz moves the article; Paul Cerutti seconds. Darren moves to amend the article to state, "Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures of $571,300.00 for operating expenses for the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026?"; Paul Cerutti seconds. Darren states that the amendment addresses the increased appropriation to the Food Shelf. By unanimous consent, discussion on the amendment ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the motion to amend the article is passed. By unanimous consent, discussion on the article ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

Article 32: Shall the voters authorize Highway Fund expenditures of $775,882.00 for the period from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026?

Paul Cerutti moves the article; Chris Koteas seconds. Paul thanks the Select Board and other Town Officials for all their work. Norm Etkind thanks Thomas (Skip) Lindsay for all the hard work he has put into the town’s FEMA claims. Diana Peduzzi thanks the Road Crew for a great job this year. By unanimous consent, discussion ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed. Voters applaud.

At approximately 12:10 P.M., by unanimous consent, State Representative David Yacovone addresses the meeting regarding, in his opinion, two of the most important issues facing the State Legislature: the deficient healthcare system; and local control of school closures and property taxes for education. Rep. Yacovone receives comments, and answers questions from the assembly. Voters applaud. Then State Representative Saudia LaMont addresses the meeting and answers a question regarding her work in the Housing Committee on issues including housing, labor, equity, employee rights and human rights. Voters applaud.

At 12:20 P.M., by unanimous consent, the meeting recesses for a 30-minute lunch. Lunch is served by Friends of Woodbury Elementary School (WES) to raise money for the school; the food was prepared and donated by members of the community. At 12:50 P.M. the meeting resumes.

Article 33: To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.
Gary Smith moves the article; Cacky Peltz seconds. Cacky thanks Stephen Murphy for being positive in moderating Town Meeting, and also for doing the Mock Town Meeting for Woodbury Elementary School. Cacky asks if other schools have started conducting Mock Town Meetings of their own. Stephen says yes, Craftsbury Elementary and Hazen Union have held meetings, and Calais Elementary will hold a meeting this year. Stephen says he will try to further promote the event; he thanks all those involved in making the event a success—students, school staff, town officials, and Woodbury Community Library. Robin Durkee encourages people to attend a Mock Town Meeting if they have not already. Stephen explains that traditionally the meetings include two articles which determine how the school will spend its time (by taking a field trip) and its money (by discretionary funds); the meetings have been educational, inspirational, and fun. Carol Ray asks Stephen to describe the articles on the agenda for this year's meeting. Stephen explains that Article 1 asked whether WES would take a field trip to a bowling alley or a lake (students voted for the lake); Article 2 asked whether the school would purchase a tetherball set or a disk golf set (students voted for the tetherball). Jonah Meacham seeks permission for a non-voting resident — who participated in Mock Town Meeting — to address the assembly. Without objection, Dylan Meacham states that Mock Town Meeting is an amazing experience for students; it helps them learn about having a voice in the town; and it would be even cooler if Friends of WES served food (as they do at Town Meeting). Voters applaud. Stephen reads a notice submitted by Paul Council (Chair of Woodbury Conservation Commission): on March 8, 2025, from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. the Conservation Commission will be hosting a snowshoe outing at the wetlands by Woodbury Elementary School. Then, at the request of Robin (Town Clerk), Stephen announces that anyone who got voted into office, please see Robin for signing the Oath of Office form. By unanimous consent, discussion ends.

Article 34: To adjourn the meeting.
Roy Demers moves the article; Angie Grace seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the meeting is adjourned. Voters applaud.