

## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

**Saturday, February 28, 2026 – Woodbury Elementary School Gym**

Town Moderator Stephen Murphy calls the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. By unanimous consent, Moderator declares that the meeting will recesses to allow voters waiting at the check-in table to enter the meeting. At 10:15 A.M. the meeting resumes. 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. Additionally, by unanimous consent, Moderator states that a vote by paper ballot may be called by seven voters before a voice vote, or before a vote by division of the house. Moderator introduces and thanks Emmett Gordon, who serves as microphone-runner during the meeting. Voters applaud. Four attendees who are not Woodbury registered voters identify themselves. Moderator welcomes them and reminds them that they are not allowed to vote, and unless permitted by the assembly, may not make motions or speak in debate. Moderator introduces Town Officials at the head table and check-in table. Voters applaud.

Moderator submits to the assembly the following question on a point of order — the use of a voter checklist in voting by paper ballot — which is recommended by Vermont League of Cities & Towns but not customary at Woodbury Town Meeting: Shall a voter checklist be used at Town Meeting for voting by paper ballot, except in instances where the assembly votes to instruct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for a sole nominee for an office? Patrick Flood states that he’s been coming to Town Meeting for 40 years; he thinks the processes in place have worked well; he’s never seen an instance where somebody tries to vote twice, or a non-voter tries to vote; he thinks that use of a voter checklist is overkill, unnecessary, and would slow down the meeting. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the noes have it, and the question fails.

Moderator states that he has publicly declared that he would accept a nomination to be re-elected moderator; therefore, to prevent a conflict of interest, he yields the podium to the Select Board to preside over Article 1. Chris Casey (Select Board Chair) presides.

**Article 1:** Who shall be elected moderator?

Ward (Skip) Marchesani nominates Stephen Murphy; Merry Gangemi seconds. No other nominations are made. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Chris declares that Stephen Murphy, being the only nominee, 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, 2025.

Skip Marchesani moves the article; Paul Cerutti seconds. Paul gives a thank you to whomever worked on the Town Report. Voters applaud. John Reid states that three items need to be corrected:

On Page 58, add the names of Cemetery Commission Secretary Stephanie Appleton and Cemetery Commission Member Amy Eldred.

On Page 79, correct the amount requested by the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force to \$200.00 (not \$100.00).

On Page 82, in the photo caption for the back cover, add Stephanie Appleton to "Band members not in the photo."

Mary Clark asks whether the date on the Town Report should be 2026 rather than 2025. John Reid explains that Town Report refers to the previous year, 2025. Robin Durkee (Town Clerk) clarifies that Town Report refers to a calendar year, not fiscal year. Merry Gangemi asks, in the interest of public access, why the school budget is no longer included in the Town Report. She got the postcard from Mountain View Union Elementary School District which includes a code for scanning and access to the budget posted on a website. But cell service is spotty in Woodbury; and not everyone has or can afford a cell phone, or is savvy enough to use one. How much money are we saving by not including the school budget in Town Report? Is it worth denying access, for that amount of money? The last thing we need, in the environment we now live in, is secrecy, maneuvering, and barriers to access of information that we're entitled to. John Reid moves to amend Article 2 — to make the corrections to Town Report that he previously stated — to be noted in our Town Meeting Minutes, and corrected in the official digital version of the Town Report on the town's website; Paul Cerutti seconds the motion. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the motion to amend Article 2 is passed. Michael Gray asks if someone can answer Merry Gangemi's question about the school budget being omitted from Town Report. Retta Dunlap states that the school is not part of the Town of Woodbury; the consolidated Mountain View school district is a separate entity. Skip Marchesani clarifies that the question should be asked of the School Board, not the Town. Debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that Article 2 as amended is passed.

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

Moderator explains points of order regarding the nomination and election of officers. Retta Dunlap asks to what extent candidates, in introducing their candidacy, can politic for themselves. Moderator says that candidates may speak at the discretion of the assembly. Moderator quotes the applicable statute, 17 V.S.A. § 2640(c), stating that any candidate, "may introduce his or her candidacy to the extent permitted by the voters at the meeting."

### **Town Treasurer – 3 years**

Elizabeth (Lizzy) Higgins nominates Lillian (Lilly) Baron; Michael Gray seconds. Lilly introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. Merry Gangemi asks if she can ask questions about the candidate. Moderator replies no — questions about the nature of the office or procedure would be acceptable, but not debate with the candidate. Amy Eldred Hunt nominates Brandy Smith; Merry Gangemi seconds. Brandy introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Patrick Flood requests a paper ballot. More than 7 registered voters raise their hands for a paper ballot. Moderator directs the Board of Civil Authority (BCA) to conduct a vote by paper ballot. Ballots are distributed, cast, and counted by the BCA. By unanimous consent, polls close. Town Clerk Robin Durkee reports the results: 116 votes were cast, Lilly Baron received 98, Brandy Smith received 18. Moderator declares that Lilly Baron is elected to a 3-year term. Voters applaud.

### **Select Board Member – 3 years**

Chris Casey thanks outgoing member Lizzy Higgins for her years of service on the Select Board. Voters applaud. Paul Cerutti nominates John Gordon; Phil Nold-Laurendeau seconds. John introduces his candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Paul Cerutti moves to direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for John; Merry Gangemi seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the ayes have it. The Clerk casts one ballot for John who thereby is elected for a 3-year term as Select Board Member. Voters applaud.

### **Lister – 3 years**

Bonnie Collins nominates Ronald (Ron) Wells; William (Bill) Condon seconds. Ron introduces his candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Paul Cerutti moves to direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Ron; Chris Koteas seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the ayes have it. The Clerk casts one ballot for Ron who thereby is elected. Voters applaud.

### **Auditor – 3 years**

Merry Gangemi nominates Retta Dunlap. Retta declines the nomination. Robert (Bob) Martin nominates Susan Martin; Merry Gangemi seconds. By unanimous consent, nominations close. Paul Cerutti moves to direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Susan; Jayne Nold-Laurendeau seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the ayes have it. The Clerk casts one ballot for Susan Martin who thereby is elected. Voters applaud.

### **Collector of Delinquent Taxes – 1 year**

Carolyn Stewart nominates Ron Wells; Jayne Nold-Laurendeau seconds. Amy Hunt nominates Brandy Smith. Brandy declines the nomination. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Ron, being the only nominee, is elected by acclamation. Voters applaud.

### **Cemetery Commissioner – 5 years**

Patti Garbeck nominates Susan Stitely. Susan introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Susan is elected.

### **Cemetery Commissioner – 2 years**

Susan Stitely nominates Catherine (Cacky) Peltz; Carol Ray seconds. Cacky introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Cacky is elected. Voters applaud.

### **Library Trustee – 2 years**

Deanna (Dede) Avery nominates Allison Schmitt; David (Dave) Barber seconds. Allison introduces her candidacy. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Allison is elected.

### **Hazen Union School District Director – 3 years**

Chris Casey nominates Steven Freihofner, who is not in attendance. Chris confirms that Steven is willing to serve, but as he has served in the office for 12 or 15 years, he would defer to another candidate. No other candidates are nominated. By unanimous consent, nominations close then Moderator declares that Steven is elected. Voters applaud.

Moderator thanks all the candidates and elected officers. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, Ron Wells is permitted to address the assembly: he thanks everyone for coming out and voting; it's the largest group of people he's seen for quite some time; he thanks them for their support, and he'll do his best for them all. Voters applaud.

**Article 4:** Shall the Town have its taxes paid to the Town Treasurer, as Tax Receiver, sixty days after tax bills are mailed? (Estimated due date will be Oct. 29, 2026.) After the due date, taxes will become delinquent and be turned over to the Collector of Delinquent Taxes for collection with a penalty of one-half percent per month, that increases by one-half percent per month of delinquency up to a maximum of six percent if delinquent for one full year. Interest of one-half percent per month will also be charged. All of this revenue goes to the town.

Paul Cerutti moves the article; Skip Marchesani seconds. Moderator restates the article. There is no debate. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

**Article 5:** Shall the Town vote to exempt property owned by and used for the purposes of our non-profit volunteer fire, rescue and ambulance services? If so voted, such property also will be exempt from the education grand list and the equalized education grand list.

Skip Marchesani moves the article; Susan Martin seconds. Moderator restates the article. Susan Stitely asks, What does this mean? What is the amount of tax exemption? Paul Cerutti (Fire Chief) says he is not a lister, but he understands this article as follows: the Volunteer Fire Dept. is a private nonprofit corporation, so their property is not statutorily exempt from property taxes; the property is included in the education grand list, and taxed; that tax bill is passed to the Town; therefore the tax money goes around in a circle. Paul says he believes that any exemption is subject to renewal every ten years. Robin Durkee says that she researched this issue after it was raised at the Pre-Town Meeting Forum; research shows that after the original exemption, it is subject to renewal every 5 years; the Fire Dept. property was last exempted in 2017. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

**Article 6:** Shall the Town appropriate \$25,888.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to fund the truck loan payment in the amount of \$23,888.00 and to fund the truck maintenance reserve in the amount of \$2,000.00, both to be paid in full by July 01, 2026?

Skip Marchesani moves the article; Susan Martin seconds. Moderator restates the article. There is no debate. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

**Article 7:** Shall the Town appropriate \$134,990.88 to fund the operations of the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department? The Capital Replacement Fund to be paid in full by January 1, 2027, in the amount of \$35,000.00 and the Operating Expenses of \$99,990.88 paid in quarterly installments of \$24,997.72 starting July 1, 2026.

Bill Condon moves the article; Sara VanHof seconds. Moderator restates the article. Bill Condon states that the Fire Dept. saved his life again this year as they did last year and they deserve every last penny

they get. Voters applaud. Elizabeth (Libby) Case asks if Calais is paying its fair share to Woodbury based on the number of calls per year. Paul Cerutti says that Calais pays 50% of capital expenses and 1/3 of operating expenses. Historically, the number of calls to Calais is slightly greater than Woodbury because Calais has a larger population; but this year the disparity is greater, especially for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Calais also pays East Montpelier Fire Dept. 50% of their capital expenses and 1/3 of their operating expenses. This arrangement keeps the cost aligned with the service provided. Libby asks if this is fair. Paul answers yes, for now, but if the large disparity continues, we may have to reconsider the operating expenses. Bruce Tucker asks Paul to explain the Fire Dept.'s future plans and intentions for spending its money. Paul explains that the plan is to continue current operations; the budget reflects the realities of expenses. Members of the Fire Dept. receive a stipend of \$12.50 per call, whether that call lasts one hour or 14 hours; the purpose of the stipend is to cover the cost of members' gasoline, ruined clothes, etc. The rest of the Fire Dept.'s expenses cover insurance, fuel, and dispatching. Paul does not foresee the operation of the Fire Dept. changing in the next 5 to 10 years; changes in operations are made in response to emergencies in a changing environment; no major changes are coming. Bruce Tucker asks where the Fire Dept. is heading. Why are they building an addition to the new Fire Station? What services will they add? Woodbury is not a huge town; many surrounding communities have fire departments that provide mutual aid, which keeps costs down. Paul replies that the new Fire Station as originally planned was going to be 7,000 square feet, but due to funding constraints the size was reduced to 4,100. They were going to keep the original fire station but it flooded in 2023 and 2024; the building could not be saved so the addition is needed for the equipment that was housed in that building; the cost for the addition will be paid entirely by a Congressional earmark sponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders. Retta Dunlap (Fire Dept. President) explains that this Winter the furnace in the annex failed so the equipment stored there was moved to the original fire station; the addition will enable the Fire Dept. to house all its equipment under one roof. Retta is amazed at all the work done by the Fire Dept.; \$12.50 per call is not much at all. The Fire Dept. and the emergency service system need volunteers, both firefighters and EMS; the Fire Dept. needs a Treasurer. The mutual aid system is strained by a shortage of personnel. Marcial Rodriguez-Arenal says that emergency services are expensive; volunteers keep our system functioning; the purpose of mutual aid is not to save money but rather to provide personnel; this issue is not about money, we need volunteers. Voters applaud. Bob Martin asks if the Fire Dept. separately records EMS responses to young people's drug overdoses and old people's falls. Paul Cerutti states that he cannot put that separate information in a public record; drug overdoses are fewer but not gone, and they will always be part of our response; anecdotally, the largest percentage of our EMS calls are for older folks experiencing health emergencies; generally we respond within 5 to 10 minutes whereas an ambulance responds within 15 to 20 minutes. Bob Martin says that the 5 mile distance from the Fire Dept. makes a huge difference in insurance; he asks if many places in town are beyond the 5 mile radius. Paul explains that homeowners insurance premiums are based on a 10-year loss average. Woodbury does well because we're an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 8 town (1 being the best, 10 the worst); because we do not have paid firefighters or a municipal fire hydrant water system, Class 8 is the best rating we can achieve; anybody living within 5 miles of Woodbury Fire Station receives a reduced premium on their homeowners insurance. Homes in West Woodbury are probably beyond 5 miles; some homes in Calais are beyond 5 miles; these may require high-risk insurance; lack of fire protection can result in inability to get a mortgage. Woodbury's investments in the Fire Dept., in time and money, ensure that we get credit from the insurance industry. John Gordon states that he is a non-voting member of the Fire Dept.; he attends business meetings and truck checks. He says that last year the Fire Dept. responded to approximately

220 calls. The new Fire Station enables quick and effective services; the old fire station served its purpose for many years, but its size was restrictive. Most of the Fire Dept.'s responses are measured in single minutes whereas responses from Hardwick are measured in double-digit minutes; when you make that call, those minutes matter. Voters applaud. Merry Gangemi describes two incidents that occurred near her house during the past Winter that required response from 911; the Fire Dept. responded within 10 minutes; they were wonderful. We need these services. Even if we had to pay more money, she thinks it's worth it. Voters applaud. Skip Marchesani humorously describes an incident when the Fire Dept. responded to an alarm at his house caused by excess smoke from cooking lunch. Skip explains that the Fire Dept., when responding to an alarm and finding doors locked and no occupant home or responsive, is required to break into the house. To avoid damage from this forced entry, Skip recommends a Knox Box — a secure box mounted near the front door of a house, containing a house key or code, accessible to the Fire Dept., enabling entry in response to an alarm. Skip thanks the Fire Dept. for their service. Voters applaud. Ron Wells calls the question; Kara Hooper seconds. Moderator explains that, if adopted, calling the question will end debate and move us directly to the vote on Article 7. Adoption requires approval of 2/3 of voters. Moderator conducts a vote by show of hands then, without counting, declares that clearly the ayes have it and the motion passes. Moderator conducts a voice vote on Article 7 then declares it is passed. Voters applaud.

Moderator announces that State Representatives Saudia LaMont and David Yacovone have joined the meeting; they are not voting members of the town, however customarily we invite them to speak and field questions. Moderator seeks unanimous consent. John Gordon objects and requests that we first address Article 8. Moderator addresses Article 8.

**Article 8:** Shall the Town appropriate \$100,100.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to fund the loan payment for the Fire and Emergency Operations Center, paid November 1, 2026.

Patrick Flood moves the article; John Gordon seconds. Moderator restates the article. There is no debate. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

By unanimous consent, Paul Cerutti addresses the assembly. He expresses thanks for the questions and support. He states that the drug issues have somewhat subsided, but are not over; this will be part of our experience for a long time. Paul describes the severity of the emergencies handled by the Fire Dept. He asks members of the Fire Dept. to rise; he thanks them; voters applaud. Paul praises members' preparation and hard work, and funding provided by voters. He appeals for volunteers for this tough and rewarding work. Also, the Fire Dept. needs a treasurer. Retta Dunlap says that the Fire Dept is looking for non-voting members to help with truck checks and shoveling snow. Voters applaud.

Skip Marchesani requests that people be allowed to eat lunch while the Representatives address the assembly. Ann (Ana) Peltz requests that the noise level be kept low so the Representatives can be heard. By unanimous consent, Moderator welcomes the Representatives. Saudia LaMont describes her work in the Committee on General and Housing to promote the production of housing; limit permitting restrictions; facilitate ownership of manufactured homes; balance the eviction process between landlords and tenants; and pass two corrective labor bills. Voters applaud. David Yacovone, who serves on the Appropriations Committee, explains his support for a 3% income tax surcharge on the nearly 3,600 tax filers in Vermont who earn more than \$500,00 per year. This tax would yield between \$80 to \$90 million

to address, for example, the potential loss of interpreters for blind and deaf people and counseling for senior citizens; chronically absent students; high-hazard dams; and failing dairy farms. He welcomes voters to contact him. Patrick Flood states that Vermont is one of the most expensive places in the world to get healthcare; he has not heard a serious healthcare proposal from the Governor; he asks for a response. Rep. Yacovone attributes the high cost to the insurance industry; the solution would involve a change to the healthcare system at the national level. Rep. LaMont states her support for universal healthcare; she wants the system to focus on healthcare, not sick care. Voters applaud. Retta Dunlap states her opposition to the pending Act 250 wildlife corridors which would devalue her property by requiring costly permitting processes for development. Reps. Yacovone and LaMont express agreement with Retta's position. Retta states that the public education system is broken; it needs to be reimagined and redesigned; she supports homeschooling; families should have the right to choose which school to attend. Reps. Yacovone and LaMont are homeschoolers. Rep. LaMont agrees with Retta that current school reformers are not having the right conversations. Bob Martin states his understanding that the Vermont Legislature forced a liaison officer into the UVM medical network; he wonders if that officer will be able to access UVM's financial statements; we're paying twice as much as New Hampshire for the same insurance. Rep. Yacovone says that he does not know about the liaison, but he does support such transparency. Returning to education reform, he states that he and Rep. LaMont believe that the authority to close a public school should be held exclusively by the town in which the school is located. Voters applaud. Ellie Hayes asks Rep. Yacovone, What is the likelihood that the previously described wealth tax will be adopted? Rep. Yacovone says that he is optimistic; there seems to be sufficient support in the House; nearly sufficient support in the Senate; and a questionable veto by the Governor. Michael Gray asks whether the Senators who represent Woodbury also support the tax. Rep. Yacovone replies that Senator Watson has publicly supported the tax, but he is uncertain about Senators Cummings and Perchlik. Graham Christie states his opposition to the pending changes to Act 250 which would devalue his property, restrict development, and increase costs of building single-family homes. Voters applaud. Rep. LaMont expresses agreement. Tepin Delaney announces that on June 8, Woodbury Community Library will hold another "Connect With Your Legislators" event including supper and conversation. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator thanks Representatives and invites them to lunch. Voters applaud.

Moderator seeks unanimous consent to recess for lunch. A voter objects and requests continuation of the meeting. Libby Case makes a motion to recess for lunch for 15 minutes then resume the meeting at 1:00 P.M.; Chris Koteas seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the ayes have it; the meeting recesses. At 1:07 P.M. the meeting resumes. Moderator thanks Hardwick Community Television and cameraman Lance for filming this meeting and other public events. Voters applaud.

**Article 9:** Shall the voters appropriate \$26,987.00 for the support of the Woodbury Community Library?

Skip Marchesani moves the article; Chris Koteas seconds. Moderator restates the article. Jayne Nold-Laurendeau supports the funding of the Library because they do so many wonderful things. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

**Article 10:** Shall the voters appropriate \$17,300.00 for the support of the Woodbury Cemeteries?

Skip Marchesani moves to consolidate the voting for Articles 10-32; Sara VanHof seconds. 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. Moderator states, regarding Article 32, 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 agency's Fiscal Year 2026 budget of \$78.9 million; yet if anyone objects, he will step aside and yield the moderating to the Select Board. Without objection, Moderator proceeds. Susan Martin states that, the last time she was an auditor, they agreed to freeze the amounts of these appropriations; we should not be increasing these amounts. Susan Stitely, member of the Woodbury Cemetery Commission, which seeks funding in Article 10, says that she would be hesitant to freeze funding for the Cemetery Commission because every year is different and we don't know what will arise. She thanks Jamie Dutil for her years of service; and Cacky Peltz for volunteering; and Patti Garbeck for putting up the sign at South Woodbury Cemetery. We will be placing signs at all the cemeteries. Also, we have a green burial section for natural burials using a simple casket and biodegradable materials, without chemicals or embalming; these burials are ecological and much cheaper than traditional cremation or casket burials. Last year we got quotes to build a road to access the green burial section, but the proposed road was too steep, so we plan to develop an alternative road to provide easier and more direct access. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that Articles 10-32 are passed.

**Article 11:** Shall the voters appropriate \$2,500.00 to the Woodbury/Calais Food Shelf?

**Article 12:** Shall the voters appropriate \$750.00 to Aid to Women, Men and Children in Abuse and Rape Emergencies (A.W.A.R.E.)?

**Article 13:** Shall the voters appropriate \$250.00 to the American Red Cross of NH/VT?

**Article 14:** Shall the voters appropriate \$600.00 to Central Vermont Adult Basic Education?

**Article 15:** Shall the voters appropriate \$750.00 to the Central Vermont Council on Aging?

**Article 16:** Shall the voters appropriate \$300.00 to the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation?

**Article 17:** Shall the voters appropriate \$2,000.00 to Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice Inc.?

**Article 18:** Shall the voters appropriate \$650.00 to CIRCLE (Battered Women's Services)?

**Article 19:** Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to Elevate Youth Services (Washington County Youth Services)?

**Article 20:** Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to the Family Center of Washington County?

**Article 21:** Shall the voters appropriate \$484.00 to Green Mountain Transit?

**Article 22:** Shall the voters appropriate \$50.00 to Green Up Vermont?

**Article 23:** Shall the voters appropriate \$750.00 to Hardwick Community Television?

**Article 24:** Shall the voters appropriate \$200.00 to Mosaic VT (Sexual Assault Crisis Team)?

**Article 25:** Shall the voters appropriate \$200.00 to the Our House of Central Vermont?

**Article 26:** Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to People's Health and Wellness Clinic?

**Article 27:** Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to Rural Community Transportation?

**Article 28:** Shall the voters appropriate \$200.00 to Salvation Farms?

**Article 29:** Shall the voters appropriate \$2,500.00 to Twin Valley Senior Center?

**Article 30:** Shall the voters appropriate \$210.00 to Vermont Center for Independent Living?

**Article 31:** Shall the voters appropriate \$200.00 to the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force?

**Article 32:** Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000.00 to Washington County Mental Health Services?

**Article 33:** Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures of \$639,081 for operating expenses for the period from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027?

Paul Cerutti moves the article; Dave Barber seconds. Moderator restates the article. Paul thanks the Select Board and people doing this tough job. Voters applaud. Amy Hunt asks why the Treasurer's salary increased so much. Lizzy Higgins (outgoing Select Board member) explains that the salary increased for two reasons: 1) We found that we had been paying our Treasurer a pretty low, non-competitive rate. When our old Treasurer Brandy Smith left, we needed to hire somebody; luckily we retained current Treasurer Lilly Baron who has done an awesome job. We need to pay the person a rate that allows them to stay in the position. 2) We increased the hours. The Select Board has given Lilly extra tasks — work that is necessary, but lacking someone to do it — which increase the time required to fulfill the job. Chris Casey (Select Board Chair) states that, in addition to handling more responsibilities, Lilly has made numerous improvements, and created documents, for instance, a best-practice formal offer letter for prospective employees, which previously we did not have; this is a small example of Lilly's work which will place Woodbury on a more solid footing. I think this is money well spent. Patrick Flood says, referring to the Town Report, it appears that many positions in our town government got an increase in compensation, including the Road Crew — which is well-deserved — and the Town Clerk, and the Librarian. This is just a reality; the world has changed; it is not 1975 anymore; COVID disrupted everything and salaries increased everywhere; if we want to be competitive, and have employees who do their jobs well, and have a good functioning town, then we will have to spend a little bit more; and it is really not that much for what we are getting in return. Voters applaud. Deborah LaRose asks why the Treasurer is getting paid more the Town Clerk when the Town Clerk has a lot more responsibility. Diana Peduzzi (Select Board member) says that she was the Town Clerk for 10 years, and never was the Treasurer, thank goodness. The jobs are not equivalent — the Treasurer is not only a bookkeeper, and

not only an accountant, but is someone who tracks all the money that goes through everywhere. Personally, I think that Treasurer is a more responsible, more difficult position than Town Clerk. There are state standards that have to be applied, and all jobs get more complicated — I'm sure that Town Clerk Robin's has. That's my opinion. Bob Martin says he cannot understand why Select Board members are paid so little for what they do. Voters applaud. Bob says it's basically a volunteer position; there are many more meetings now than there were in the old days. Lizzy Higgins states that, when budgeting, we looked at other towns' average pay for employees; comparatively, we found that currently our Treasurer is paid less, and our Town Clerk is paid a little bit more. So we're in the ballpark with other towns regarding compensation. Amy Hunt asks why we are paying Treasurer Lilly an hourly wage while she takes her courses. I can understand paying a reimbursement when she passes the course, but why are we paying her to take the course? Moderator clarifies that the payment is made to the Town Officer, whoever is in that position; here it happened to be Lilly. Moderator restates the question: Why is the payment being made for the training of the Town Officer? Amy states that most places, like the State, reimburse the cost of the course, if passed; they don't reimburse the hours spent for taking the course. Why are we? Why is our tax money being used in this way? Marcial Rodriguez-Arenal says that paid training is common practice everywhere. He gets paid to train; he is grateful, and he can do his job better. This issue is not a big deal. Skip Marchesani states that he spent his whole career working for a Fortune 500 company. For any required training, they paid for my salary, travel, and living expenses. I don't think this is a big issue. Rebecca (Becky) Browning says that the salary is a modest amount considering the expectation that this person keeps track of our money. This is a very small price to pay; we can't afford mistakes. Chris Casey says that the Select Board approved the request for paid training; they felt that someone who took the initiative to engage in professional development was going to benefit the town. It's important to pay for learning new skills and ways of doing things, that will benefit us. Graham Christie states that he was a municipal building inspector in Florida for 16 years. He says we were always paid for training because you want your staff up-to-date and knowledgeable about everything. It's absolutely necessary to have our people trained, and they should be compensated for it. Dave Barber (Treasurer of the Library Board of Trustees) states his understanding that the Select Board and Town clerk employees are part-time with no benefits, health insurance, or paid time off. In the current job market, it's difficult to find time outside your bread-and-butter employment, to contribute locally. I think it's common practice these days to pay for the training. Considering that there are little to no other benefits, the cost of the training is a drop in the bucket. Diana Peduzzi states that all Town Officers are paid for their training, including trainings attended remotely via Zoom. Also, part-time employees get some benefits; they get paid time off. Lilly Baron clarifies that her paid time is spent in front of an instructor; it does not include time spent studying, reviewing, and doing assignments. Robin Durkee, referring to Payroll Expenses on page 29 in the Town Report, asks why the Delinquent Tax Collector did not get the 3% raise that the rest of us got. Bonnie Collins, referring to page 27, states that we are paying the Treasurer \$31.50 per hour; the Assistant Treasurer \$45.00 per hour; and the Delinquent Tax Collector \$35.44 per hour. Both of those positions are paid more than our Town Treasurer. I think that the amount being paid is sufficient. Lizzy Higgins asks if Robin Durkee's previous question is relevant to Article 33. Moderator rules the question in order because an expenditure on payroll would affect the budget. Diana Peduzzi, referring to Bonnie's comment, explains that the payment of \$45.00 to the Asst. Treasurer was a little inflated because we were paying Brandy Smith as Asst. Treasurer while she was training Lilly as the new Treasurer. Moderator stresses that in debate and discussion we stay focused not on personalities but on the positions and roles and money being paid to officers. Lilly Baron, responding to Robin's question, clarifies that these figures are just estimates. Next

fiscal year, the hourly rate for the Delinquent Tax Collector will increase by 3%. The budget of \$5,000.00 for Delinquent Tax Collector will not increase by 3% because in FY 2025, the actual expense was only about \$2,800.00. So, considering the difference between the budget amount and the actual expense, the budget of \$5,000.00 is sufficient. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

**Article 34:** Shall the voters authorize Highway Fund expenditures of \$864,599 for the period from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027?

Paul Cerutti moves the article; Skip Marchesani seconds. Moderator restates the article. Paul Cerutti says, "Good job." Voters applaud. Chris Casey explains the increase to the Highway Equipment Replacement Fund (HERF), based on the Capital Equipment Plan developed by Treasurer Lilly Baron. Previously we put \$90,000.00 annually in the HERF fund, but now it is pretty clear, after the purchase of our new truck, that \$90,000.00 is not enough to fund future purchases. It was recommended that \$150,000.00 be put in the HERF, but the Select Board decided that we could not spend that much, so we budgeted \$125,000.00. I encourage everybody to anticipate, going forward, that we will have to increase that amount because vehicles and large equipment are quickly becoming extremely expensive. We need to maintain our roads and keep them passable, so we need our trucks. By unanimous consent, debate ends. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares that the article is passed.

**Article 35:** To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

Skip Marchesani moves the article; Gayle McFarland seconds. Eve Gordon (non-registered voter) asks to address the assembly. By unanimous consent, voters approve. Eve says that she noticed that the American flag by the Post Office steps is showing some wear — is there anything the Town can do to help replace it? Robin Durkee states that the flag is the property of the Post Office; she will talk with the manager of the Post Office (who is in Hardwick) to get the flag replaced. Voters applaud. By unanimous consent, debate ends.

**Article 36:** To adjourn the meeting.

Roy Demers moves the article; Jayne Nold-Laurendeau seconds. Moderator conducts a voice vote then declares at 1:47 P.M. that the meeting is adjourned. Voters applaud.

Dated at Woodbury, Vermont this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026

Stephen Murphy, Moderator \_\_\_\_\_

Chris Casey, Select Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Attest: Graham Christie, Town Clerk \_\_\_\_\_