

TOWN OF PEACHAM, VERMONT

Minutes of the 2026 Annual Town Meeting

The legal voters of the Town of Peacham met at the Peacham Meetinghouse in Peacham, Vermont on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 11:20 am.

Moderator Tim McKay opened the meeting.

Article 1: To elect a Moderator to conduct and govern the meeting and to continue to serve as Moderator for a term of one year or until his or her successor is elected.

Cynther Greene nominated Tim McKay.

Rick Scholes moved to close nominations. Seconded by Peter Craig. The motion passed by voice vote.

Tim McKay was elected as Moderator for a term of one year by voice vote.

Article 2: To receive the report of the Town Auditors.

Auditor Charlotte Mooney explained that the Auditors' Report was on page 40 of the town report.

Ron Craig moved to receive the report of the auditors. Seconded by Dick Browne.

The motion passed by a voice vote.

Article 3: Shall the voters approve total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$3,297,625.62, of which \$1,454,998.43 shall be raised by taxes and \$1,842,627.19 by nontax revenue?

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Joel Wright stated that he was opposed to the budget and that his tax bill has increased by 72% since buying his house in 2013, even though the cumulative rate of inflation was 38%. He explained that he is frustrated by the affordability crisis in Peacham and that the tax burden has become increasingly onerous. Morgan Gold echoed Wright's concern about the increased cost of living and pointed out that the cost of taxes is a significant function of property values, so it's not a straight up comparison to index the inflation of tax bills without recognizing the increase in market appreciation of home values.

Ellie Blachly asked if increased property values correlate to the increase in property tax rates. Rick Scholes explained that the last town-wide reassessment was completed in 2019 and that the property assessments on the current tax bills were determined by the sales during the four years prior to 2019. Since that time, properties have been selling for higher amounts and the town's common level of appraisal (CLA) has decreased, which has caused the town to be penalized by the state through the education tax rates.

Betsy McKay asked why the budget was down substantially since the previous year. Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam explained that the town has been catching up on deferred maintenance over the past few years but that the town was still incurring costs year in and year out, it was just a matter of when they were paid. The town is now resurfacing a mile of paved road a year for around \$150,000 and is switching from leasing town trucks to owning them. The Selectboard's objective during this year's budgeting process was to achieve a stable tax bill that accounted for inflation rates and didn't defer any maintenance or capital saving. The Selectboard was striving

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for a 3% increase for the total tax bill to match a typical rate of inflation, but that the majority of the budget consists of fixed costs.

Blachly thanked Dedam for the explanation and said that it's helpful to understand the nitty gritty of the budgeting process.

Cornelia Hasenfuss asked if there was a plan and funding for managing emerald ash borer. Dedam explained that emerald ash borer has recently been identified in Peacham. In 2026, the Tree Board will be identifying ash trees in the right of way and putting together a plan for mitigation.

Adam Kane asked Vermont State Senator Scott Beck to speak on affordability. Beck was given permission to speak and explained that school populations have decreased from 105,000 K-12 students in the state of Vermont to about 74,000 K-12 students, but the education system largely still reflects 105,000 students. That's putting a lot of pressure on education spending and property taxes. He expects reorganization of the education system that combines local, regional, and state control, but he can't say what that will look like. They are trying hard to retain the current tuitioning program in Peacham and there's potential for the projected education tax rates to change. Bruce Westcott asked Beck to take back a message on behalf of small towns like Peacham that it's existential and it's about the quality and nature of the community. Beck agreed with Westcott and explained that the people from Chittenden County don't understand how important schools are to the rural towns that have them, but Peacham is proof that local, small schools can be operated very well and cost-effectively. However, it can become problematic when towns the size of Peacham try to run middle schools or high schools. Blachly stated that the school discussion is more than just about money, but about the quality of the community. Alex MacLean pointed out that a major driving force behind school budgets is health care and Beck explained that they're doing a lot to try and mitigate rising health care costs. There will probably be an upcoming bill to change negotiation rules so that a less expensive option can be chosen. Dart Thalman asked why education spending couldn't be tied to income tax. Beck explained that there would have to be a 50% increase in income taxes which would be logistically very hard to do and politically impossible. Lydia Cochrane asked what is paid out of the ed fund. Beck explained that there is \$2.5 billion in the ed fund and that \$2.1 billion goes to the school districts, a quarter of a billion dollars goes to the census block grant for special education, \$50 million goes towards transportation reimbursements, and the remainder goes towards things like free school lunches, state payments for teacher pensions and retirement healthcare. Margaret MacLean got permission to speak and asked Beck if he supported moving costs that aren't strictly education expenses to the general fund. Beck responded that he'd be open to the conversation and supportive of moving mental health and behavior interventionist services out of the school districts and into the mental health agencies that handle them.

Dick Browne asked to have the conversation return to the town budget.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 3 passed by a voice vote.

Recess

Peter Craig moved to recess the meeting until 1:00 pm. Seconded by Christian Snow. The meeting was recessed by voice vote.

The meeting reconvened at 1:08 pm

Article 4: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$10,679, to be raised in taxes, to support the following organizations? These requests are the same amounts as requested in 2025.

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ORGANIZATION	Request	Services to Peacham (see agency reports for further information)
Caledonia Home Health Care and Hospice	\$2,000	Home health care; hospice; long-term care; maternal/child care; homemaking; nursing visits; home health aides; therapy visits.
Catamount Arts	\$500	Arts education, live performances, films, festivals, gallery exhibits, First Night.
Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium	\$650	Provides free unlimited general admission for all Peacham residents; offers science education, exhibits, and weather/information services.
Kingdom Animal Shelter	\$500	To facilitate placement of stray and unwanted animals and pets (cats); to establish and maintain an animal shelter; and to prevent overpopulation and cruelty to animals.
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging	\$660	Services to seniors: senior meals programs; wellness and fitness programs; health insurance counseling; family caregiver support; elder justice advocacy; benefits advocacy; problem-solving for Social Security and insurance; budgeting assistance.
Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.	\$769	Mental health services (request based on \$1.05 per resident from 2010 census).
Northeast Kingdom Learning Services	\$300	Provides learning and childcare services throughout the Northeast Kingdom.
Northeast Kingdom Youth Services	\$500	Services to teens; parent education program; Living Room day shelter for teens; court diversion program; school outreach/mentoring programs; transitional living assistance.
Rural Community Transportation, Inc.	\$500	Regional public transportation services with scheduled services to Peacham.
SASH (Support and Services at Home)	\$2,000	SASH provides free support and services at home for elderly and disabled people who are Medicare eligible, including wellness visits, medication reviews, blood pressure screening, and healthy living planning.
Umbrella	\$500	Counseling, support, and safety for women, children, and families in crisis; safe house network; childcare assistance.
VT Assoc. for the Blind and Visually Impaired	\$500	Training, services, support for visually impaired Vermonters.
Vermont Green Up	\$50	Green Up Day activities and supplies in Peacham provided by Vermont Green Up.
West Danville Community Club	\$500	For maintenance of free public beach at Joe's Pond.
Window Dressers	\$750	Provides low-cost window inserts to help improve the comfort and warmth of homes in Vermont.
Repeat Requests for 2026:	\$10,679	

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Rick Scholes.

Beatrice Ring explained that a little more than a third of the appropriations go to seniors and questioned what the money for SASH was used for and how the appropriation amount was calculated. Ring proposed an amendment to lower the SASH appropriation request from \$2,000 to \$500. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Auditor Charlotte Mooney explained that the SASH report was on page 97 of the town report.

Jerry Senturia explained that SASH is integral to the monthly meetings of Aging Well In Peacham and provides direct services to the senior housing. He stated that he was opposed to the amendment.

Morgan Gold explained that SASH provides community support services and helps people in senior housing. He wanted to know why Ring proposed \$500 versus \$2,000. Ring responded that \$500 was more in line with the appropriation requests from similar organizations that are geared towards seniors.

Janie Carle asked why there aren't more available units in the senior housing building and Morgan Gold explained that Peacham Community Housing has been working with Rural Edge to

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update and renovate the science building and the senior housing building. Because of delays in the construction process, Rural Edge will be opening up two additional units.

Cathy Browne stated her support for the full \$2,000 appropriation.

Cynther Greene wondered how much of the SASH, NEK Council on Aging, and Caledonia Home Health Care budgets are utilized by the Peacham community.

The proposed amendment was defeated by a voice vote.

Rick Scholes proposed an amendment to add a sentence to the article that each of the organizations requesting an appropriation shall report the amount of money spent in Peacham in the preceding year. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Jerry Senturia stated that it would be difficult for some of the organizations to meet that requirement.

Selectboard Member Will Kempton explained that he had reviewed all of the appropriation requests before they were added to the warning.

Emmet Quinn stated that he was opposed to the amendment due to potential increases in overhead costs at the expense of services.

Alex MacLean spoke on behalf of Umbrella and confirmed that the requirement would be difficult to fulfill.

Rick Scholes asked to withdraw his proposed amendment. Seconder Diana Senturia agreed to the withdrawal.

The proposed amendment was withdrawn by voice vote.

Robert Ruffner discussed raising the appropriation amount for Vermont Green Up for food for the volunteers. Selectboard Member Peter Craig explained that the requested appropriation was for the state organization and that money for food would have to come out of the town budget.

Fairbanks Museum Director Adam Kane encouraged Peacham residents to use the town appropriation which entitles every Peacham resident to free, unlimited admission to the museum.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 4 passed by a voice vote.

Article 5: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$1,000, to be raised in taxes, to support Peacham Community Housing?

Cynther Greene moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Peacham Community Housing President Morgan Gold thanked the voters for their continued support and explained that PCH owns the cafe, the guild, the green, the science building, and the academy apartments. They are in the process of transferring ownership of the science building and apartments to Rural Edge. The buildings will be updated and four additional units will be available.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 5 passed by a voice vote.

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Article 6: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$2,000, to be raised in taxes, to support the Peacham Historical Association?

Nathan Colpitts moved the article. Seconded by Dick Browne.

Article 6 passed by a voice vote.

Article 7: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$5,000, to be raised in taxes, to support Peacham Fire District #1?

Cynther Greene moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Peacham Fire District #1 Prudential Committee Member Jonathan Kaplan explained that the fire district serves everyone, not just village residents, and that a planned third well will increase their ability to serve everyone in town.

Article 7 passed by a voice vote.

Article 8: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$37,400, to be raised in taxes, to support the Peacham Library? This is an increase of \$1,800 from 2025's appropriation of \$35,600.

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Charlotte Mooney.

Library Board President Barb Schoolcraft thanked the community for its ongoing support and explained that the library is open for 1040 hours per year with an additional 500 hours of use.

Article 8 passed by a voice vote.

Article 9: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$1,000, to be raised in taxes, to support the West Barnet Senior Meal Site?

Jerry Senturia moved the article. Seconded by Karen Lewis.

West Barnet Senior Meal Site Board of Director Member Linda Tasker got permission to speak and explained that last year they served 7,588 in-house/takeout meals and 829 delivery meals. She described issues they've been having with equipment and explained that they're still struggling financially.

Jerry Senturia proposed an amendment to increase the appropriation amount from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Seconded by Ron Craig.

The amendment was approved by voice vote.

Moderator Tim McKay read the amended article, "Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$1,500, to be raised in taxes, to support the West Barnet Senior Meal Site?"

Article 9, as amended, passed by a voice vote.

Article 10: Shall the Town pay its real property taxes to the Town Treasurer on or before November 2, 2026, with delinquent taxes having interest charges of one percent per month and with an eight percent penalty charged against them from the due date?

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

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Article 10 passed by a voice vote.

Article 11: To elect a Town Clerk for a term of three years.

Ron Craig nominated Rebecca Washington.

Dick Browne moved to close nominations and elect Rebecca Washington by acclamation.
Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Rebecca Washington was elected as Town Clerk for a term of three years by acclamation.

Article 12: To elect a Town Treasurer and Tax Collector for a term of three years.

Peter Craig nominated Rebecca Washington.

Dick Browne moved to close nominations and elect Rebecca Washington by acclamation.
Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Rebecca Washington was elected as Town Treasurer and Tax Collector for a term of three years by acclamation.

Article 13: To elect a Selectboard member for a term of three years.

Anna Carvalho nominated Andrea Otto.

Diana Senturia moved to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Andrea Otto.
Seconded by Nathan Colpitts. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Andrea Otto was elected for a term of three years.

Dick Browne and Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam thanked outgoing Selectboard Member Peter Craig for his seven years of service on the Selectboard.

Article 14: To elect a Selectboard member for a term of two years.

Peter Craig nominated Christian Snow.

Diana Senturia moved to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Christian Snow. Seconded by Rick Scholes. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Christian Snow was elected for a term of two years.

Article 15: To elect a Selectboard member for a term of one year to complete a vacated three-year term.

Anna Carvalho nominated Christina Rumery.

Rumery introduced herself and explained that she was eager to serve and to give back to the community.

Diana Senturia moved to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Christina Rumery. Seconded by Jerry Senturia. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

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Christina Rumery was elected for a term of one year to complete a vacated three-year term.

Article 16: To elect a Lister for a term of three years.

Betsy McKay nominated Nathan Colpitts.

Diana Senturia moved to close the nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Nathan Colpitts. Seconded by Nichole Wolfgang. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Nathan Colpitts was elected for a term of three years.

Article 17: To elect an Auditor for a term of three years.

Charlotte Mooney nominated Jill Hurst.

Nicole Wolfgang moved to close the nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Jill Hurst. Seconded by Ellie Blachly. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Jill Hurst was elected for a term of three years.

Article 18: To elect a First Constable for a term of one year.

Ron Craig nominated John Sheehan.

Hearing no other nominations, John Sheehan was elected as First Constable for a term of one year by acclamation.

Article 19: To elect a Second Constable for a term of one year.

Peter Craig nominated Nate Giroux.

Hearing no other nominations, Nate Giroux was elected as Second Constable for a term of one year by acclamation.

Article 20: To elect a Delinquent Tax Collector for a term of one year.

Ron Craig nominated John Sheehan.

Hearing no other nominations, John Sheehan was elected as Delinquent Tax Collector for a term of one year by acclamation.

Article 21: To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

Dick Browne explained Town Meeting bingo.

Energy Committee Member Bruce Courtot encouraged everyone to see the Energy Committee report in the town report. He explained that there may be another community solar array in the works and that the committee is gathering volunteers to help residents with energy upgrades and weatherization.

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Selectboard Clerk Anna Carvalho explained that there are positions open on various town committees.

Cornelia Hasenfuss encouraged everyone to attend a public no kings protest in St. Johnsbury at 1:00 pm on March 28th.

Rusty Barber explained that there is grant money available to Peacham farmers through the Peacham Farm Support Grant and that applications are currently available. The grant was funded through an anonymous donation and is not taxpayer dollars.

Jonathan Kaplan stated that Larry Jensen has been the water operator for the fire district for the past 20 years and that he is retiring soon.

Fire Chief Jeff Berwick explained that the Fire Department has gotten another large Assistance to Firefighters Grant and will be able to get a new forestry unit that will cost the town \$0. He stated that they are always looking for new members of the Fire Department.

Rusty Barber gave an update on the renovations to Town Hall. There have been holdups in materials showing up onsite, but good progress is being made. He estimated that the interior work would be completed by the end of April and that the outdoor work would be completed once the ground thaws. Diana Senturia asked about the ramp going up to the gym and Barber responded that the proposed changes to the gym access are not in the current renovation plans.

Gillian Sewake pointed out that of the ten selectboard and school board members, only one member is over the age of 50. She thanked the board members and stated that she appreciates being in a town of joiners.

Moderator Tim McKay announced that this was his 15th and final year as moderator.

Peter Craig moved to adjourn. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Meeting adjourned at 2:09 pm.

The foregoing is approved and attested by:

Peacham Selectboard:


Alfred Dedam

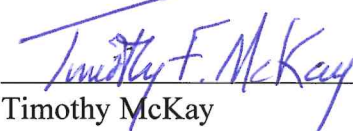

Will Kempton


Andrea Otto

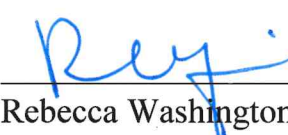

Christian Snow


Christina Rumery

Moderator:


Timothy McKay

Town Clerk:


Rebecca Washington