

Town Meeting
March 3, 2026
Attendance: Approx. 45 people

Clerk Gary opened the meeting at 10:00 am and announced that Moderator Jacob was ill and unable to attend Town Meeting. Gary explained that we needed to nominate a Moderator for the day, and he made a motion that Board Chair Harry assume the Moderator responsibilities. Board Member Nancy seconded the motion and it Harry was appointed to be Moderator.

Harry read the Warning introduction and proceeded to the Articles.

Article #1: Will the Town collect its taxes by its Treasurer, as heretofore done and if so, establish Friday, October 9, 2026, 9:0 pm, as the deadline when property taxes are due and payable. Clerk Gary made a motion to accept the article as it appears. Resident Kimberly Reid seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the article passed unanimously.

Article #2: Shall the Town allow a grace period of 5 days after the established date and time for payment during which the tax collector of delinquent taxes shall not charge a penalty pursuant to 32 V.S.A. 1674(3)(B).

Resident Kimberly Reid made a motion to accept the article as it appears. Clerk Gary seconded the motion.

Discussion: It was asked what the purpose of having extra days to pay would be. It was noted that people get paid at different times of the month and, depending on when that is, it could make a difference. Board Chair/Moderator Harry asked for the yeas and nays. The voice vote was not definitive, so Harry asked for votes by raise of hand. The hand count resulted in 13 in favor of the article and 11 opposed. The article passed and there will be a 5-day grace period from the October 9, 2026, 9pm deadline for property tax payments.

Residents in the back of the room noted they could not hear and asked that people stand and speak up. A microphone was suggested for next year's meeting.

Article #3: Shall the Town vote to accept postmark dates on or before the due date for property taxes as proof of on-time payment.

Resident Gerald Mertens made a motion to accept the article as read. The motion was seconded.

Discussions: It was noted that changes in the Postal Service's processing of mail has resulted in some letters not being postmarked on the same day you mail them. It was also noted that mail in town isn't being picked up and or delivered on a consistent basis. The consensus was postmark dates would not be a reliable as a means of verifying the date of payment. Nays were in the majority and the article did not pass. Postmarks will not be accepted as means of proof for on time property tax payments.

Article 4: Will the Town vote to discontinue the bulk mailing of Town Reports. School Board member Desmond Brown made a motion to discontinue the bulk mailing of Town Reports. The motion was seconded.

Discussion: Resident Jan Bradbury noted that no one who had a physical Post Office box in Gilman received a town report in their box. Auditor Luke noted that this was an error on his part as he thought the town reports would automatically be sent to Gilman from the Lunenburg Post Office for distribution. It was noted that shut-ins rely on this annually to get information about the Town. Jan asked if it was legal that town reports were not delivered in Gilman. Clerk Gary explained that, while it was not legal, not providing reports was a way to make the voters angry. A resident asked why the Post Office isn't delivering mail. Moderator Harry noted that we don't have any information available, and people should follow up with the Post Office. It was noted that when the regular rural mail carrier was away, a substitute was supposed to come from Lancaster, but due to staffing shortages that sometimes doesn't happen. Gary noted that he had extra town reports in the Clerk's Office, and he would delivery those to the Gilman Post Office tomorrow for distribution. Several people noted that we should continue to mail town reports and we need to do a better job to assure they get out on time. A resident asked what it cost the town to mail town reports. Gary noted that he had asked the printer to email a bill yesterday, but he had not received it. Luke noted that he had received the bill and would forward it. Gary shared that some towns mail a postcard a month before town meeting asking residents if they would like to receive a town report in the mail. It was noted that we sometimes hear people say that they don't know what's going on in town. The town report is the one piece of information we can assure that everyone gets. The Nays were in the majority and the motion failed. The town will continue to bulk mail town reports to all residents.

Article #5: Will the Town spend a sum of \$1000 per mile on Class 1, 2 and 3 Town Highways within the Town.

Discussion: Road Guy Gregg made a motion to approve to accept the article. Resident Kimberly Reed seconded the motion. Gregg explained that his line item is required by the State and allows us to receive our annual AOT Highway aid. The Yeas voted unanimously to accept this article. The Town will spend at least a sum of \$1000 per mile on Class 1, 2 and 3 Town Highways.

Article #6: Will the Town vote to accept the 2026 General Fund Budget as it appears in the Town Report. Clerk Gary made a motion to accept the 2026 General Fund Budget. Road guy Gregg seconded the motion. Gary noted that there were some errors in the budget and he wanted to announce those. Moderator Harry noted that a motion was needed to amend the budget with corrections. Gary made a motion to amend the budget to correct some errors. Board member Nancy seconded. Gary shared the following budget updates:

-4140.20 Town Clerk Payroll Taxes: The 2026 budget column amount should be \$2,000.

-Total for 4140 Election & Registration Fees: The correct total in the 2026 budget column is \$73,653.28.

-4415.10 Health & Human Services Agencies: The 2026 budget column should be \$7,994.00

-Total for 4415 Health: The correct total in the 2026 budget column is \$8,562.13.

- TOTAL EXPENSE: The correct total in the 2025 budget column should be \$1,294,167.35.
- TOTAL EXPENSE: The correct total in the 2026 actual column should be \$1,538,272.84
- NET PROFIT/LOSS: The correct total in the 2025 budget column should be \$123,002.65
- NET PROFIT/LOSS: The correct total in the 2025 actual column should be \$40,762.90 (this was the result of a formula calculation error)
- NET PROFIT/LOSS: The correct total in the 2026 budget column should be \$201,315.69.

Discussion: There was no discussion on the budget changes and the motion passed unanimously. The discussion returned to the original motion to accept the 2026 General Fund Budget as amended. There was no discussion, and the budget was passed as amended.

Article #7: Will the Town elect a Trust for the Alden Balch Library for a term of 5 years. Librarian Deb nominated Monica Eastman to be elected as a board member for 5 years. Moderator Harry seconded the motion and Monica was elected to the board.

Article #8: To conduct any further business to come before the Town.

-Road guy Gregg noted a lot of work went into this year's budget. Gregg wanted to explain the bottom-line number shown for the 2025 actual expense in Highway, as it looks much larger than the budgeted figure. Gregg explained that these additional expenses were the result of flood damage and the AOT and FEMA grant reimbursements received because of flooding totaled \$404,617.00, which covered this overage. He also noted that additional grant funding is still coming in. Sheriff Trevor thanked people for passing the budget so quickly.

Jessica Simonds, co-chair of the VCRD Community Visit Committee and Liz Benoit, CESER Task Force Chair updated residents of the many events taking place in town. CESER issues a quarterly newsletter which is distributed around town listing past and upcoming events. Jessica circulated a clip board for those who would like to receive the newsletter electronically and noted that you can contact her directly for a copy. The most recent lottery raffle sold out in a matter of hours. Jessica announced that the Hello Summer celebration will be held on Saturday, June 20th. There will also be a flashlight Easter Egg hunt on April 3rd. Candy donations are needed for that event and can be dropped off at Town Clerk's office or contact Jessica to arrange pick up. There is an upcoming Loon Your Neighbor fundraiser where you can "rent" a metal lawn to be placed on someone's lawn. Date to be announced. The Task Force's major goal is to raise funds for further development of Fox Field that would include construction of a pavilion structure and rehabbing the tennis court into a multi-use court. A resident mentioned it would be nice to have a dog park as well. Sharon Eaton reminded residents that it's important to have rules at dog parks because people are sometimes disrespectful and not all dogs are vaccinated against various ailments.

Clerk Gary reminded residents that it is a state requirement that all dogs be registered, and registrations are due April 1st. Fee is \$11 for spayed or neutered dogs. Registration takes place at the Clerk's office and you must bring a copy of your current rabies vaccine.

Clerk Gary announced a Municipal Meeting to be held at the Gilman Senior Center on Wednesday, March 4th as part of Governor Scott's Capital for a Day in Essex County. The topic of the meeting will be flooding and the state's Chief Recovery Officer, Doug Farnham, will be on hand to hear residents' concerns and questions. All are invited to attend.

Resident Jan Bradbury asked for clarification on the Senior Center Report appearing in the town report. She noted that there are two identical \$12,000 line items and the total income was off by \$12,000. Senior Center Sharon noted that the discrepancy in the total was probably the result of septic system donations that don't appear as a line item, and she would investigate further.

John Kascenska, our State Representative in Montpelier was present and let residents know that the 2025/2026 session underway. John is a member of the Appropriations Committee, which serves as a liaison between various agency's budgets and the state budget. John announced that the Governor had appointed Henry Hank Carter as the new Vermont Guard Leader. John also noted that he was elected as a trustee for the Vermont State College system. John noted that work continues on the school redistricting plan and some draft maps are available. John noted he is unsure of how the redistricting will go as there remain a lot of questions, especially related to public and independent schools. There are 18 independent schools in the State. John noted there are people in the legislature that do not want to see any money go to independent schools, but he disagrees with that and supports our many independent schools.

He reminded residents that the initial Task Force selected by the Governor was asked to draft 3 or 4 possible school district maps. That Task Force instead proposed that schools located close to each other work on common contracts to help cut costs. Residents noted that closure of the Lunenburg Elementary School is of concern. John does not believe that our school is danger of being closed from discussions he's had with state leaders. He noted that the Agency of Education has undergone a great deal of reorganization over the past year with the goal of improving on what they do. John asked attendees to reach out to him with questions, comments, concerns.

It was noted that, during the last redistricting, we had been promised that a school closure in the community would be difficult unless the Town supported it. But a loophole in the regulations allowed the school district to keep the Gilman Middle School open as an educational facility with a head start program on site and thus, no town vote was required. A resident shared the concern that the Town will continue to have a say in their public schools. We used to have a local school board which we lost to redistricting and residents wondered if the new redistricting would take more away from local control.

John noted that all meetings in the legislature are posted on YouTube. John is running for reelection and would appreciate our support. John acknowledged the good work going on in Lunenburg in getting grants.

Desmond Brown was appointed as our new school board member to Kingdom East School Board and is on today's ballot. Jim Peyton retired from the school board after serving for many years. With Jim's departure, we still have another opening in Lunenburg for a representative to the Kingdom East School Board. John noted that it was Important that our school board members report back to the Town on a regular basis.

Board Chair/Moderator Harry noted that the Kingdom East School District does a good job with announcing meetings and that all meetings are available on Zoom. Residents are encouraged to get involved and attend meetings.

Resident James Abbruscato suggested voters consider increasing the appropriation to the Senior Center to \$15,000. It was noted that the budget reflects what individual organizations ask for.

Resident Mary Yackley asked about about paying property taxes twice a year rather than once a year and reminded residents that this was discussed in the past and she wondered if people still had comments about that or were interested in adopting twice a year property tax payments. Clerk Gary noted that it would involve extra work, but if residents wanted it we would work it out. He did note that anyone can come into the Clerk's office at any time during the year and make partial property tax payments.

Spencer Hudson the new owner of the Lunenburg Variety Deli introduced himself. He is also the owner of Barney's Market in Concord. The store will now be called Lunenburg Station and he invited residents to reach out with suggestions or questions. The store will likely be closed for approximately a month for renovations. He noted his partner in the operation is Hannah Morris. They both are excited to be part of the Town. A resident asked if the ice cream window will remain open. Spencer noted that they were reevaluating all operations and would make decisions as appropriate. He noted they hoped to upgrade the pumps as well. He thanked residents for allowing them be part of the community and residents expressed encouragement and support.

Sharon Eaton announced that the Gilman Senior Center has a new director, Crystl Young. She is bringing a lot of excitement to the center. Sharon noted that she is stepping away from responsibilities and she's excited for the Center to continue and improve on what they offer. She noted that a new covered walkway is being installed in the Spring. Bingo and the Book Club continue, and she noted there were so many good things happening at the Center. Residents acknowledged and appreciated Sharon's work over the years.

Resident Carroll Macie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Chair/Moderator Harry seconded the motion and Town Meeting was adjourned at 11:18 am.