

# TOWN OF PEACHAM, VERMONT

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## Minutes of the 2023 Annual Town Meeting

The Legal Voters of the Town of Peacham met at the Peacham Congregational Church in Peacham, Vermont on Tuesday, March 7th, 2023 at 10:00AM

Tim McKay, Moderator, reminded the attendees that free daycare is available, thanked Frank Miller and Patrice McDonough for the use of their quilts, Peacham Academy Alumni for the use of their tables, and Susan Chandler for the great tablecloths covering the tables. McKay also thanked those for organizing the potluck lunch today. McKay spoke of the importance of the lunch not only as a tradition but as a way to share a meal with neighbors and possibly meet some new residents. This is an opportunity to share a meal as a community despite any differing opinions that emerge during today's meeting. The cost was \$4. McKay asked all to take a moment of silence to remember all who we have lost during the last year. McKay also congratulated the new parents and new families who have moved to town.

Peter Craig thanked Thomas Galinat for his 9 years of service. The residents gave a standing ovation.

McKay asked Peter Craig, to lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bruce Maclean welcomed everyone to the Peacham Meeting House, he stated that the building has been a meeting place for over 200 years. Maclean encouraged all to participate in the local food drive.

McKay then quoted part of a speech from November of 1862 by Frederick Douglas on the work of the future;

*"The structure of the American Constitution and Government imply the existence among the whole people of a fraternal good will, an earnest spirit of co-operation for the common good, a mutual dependence of all upon each and of each upon all. The Government is not enthroned above the people but is of, by and through the people."*

Katherine Siner read a poem in response, the residents clapped.

Bruce Westcott played America the Beautiful on the piano, the residents sang along and clapped.

McKay went over the ground rules for the day: Respect is the order of the day, this meeting is for registered voters and visitors may speak by permission only. The meeting will be governed by Roberts Rules of Order 11<sup>th</sup> Edition except where Vermont State Law applies. McKay elaborated on Roberts Rules for the day. Only warned articles are binding.

McKay read the beginning of the Warning and asked Peter Craig, Selectboard Chair, to open the meeting and read Article 1.

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

Kathy Corcoran nominated Tim McKay. Seconded by Betsy McKay. There were no other nominations. Motion to close nomination by Kathy Corcoran, all in favor, nominations were closed. **Tim McKay** elected Moderator by voice vote.

**Article 2:** To hear and act upon the report of the Town Auditors.

The article was received without comment or motion.

**Article 3:** Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$1,785,781.25, of which \$1,055,148.61 shall be raised by taxes and \$730,632.64 by nontax revenue?

Barry Lawson moved to hear the article, seconded by Diana Senturia. The article passed by a voice vote.

- Peter Craig, Selectboard Chair, said that the budget is increasing due to cost of living increases.
- Mark Clough asked what the effect to the tax rate would be. Thomas Galinat, Town Treasurer, said the increase is about \$150/\$100,000 or an increase of about 26.5%. Galinat continued that about 10% of that 26.5% increase is represented by \$72,000 of unexpended funds used to lower 2022's budget.
- Joel Wright asked if the tax rate is set by the State, Galinat said it was set by the voters today.
- Barry Lawson asked if there was an area of particular expense. Craig said there was nothing in particular, just everything is more expensive.

**Article 4:** Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to be raised by taxes, and to be held in the Capital Building Fund until used, for the sole purpose of the acquisition and installation of new signs within the Village?

Ron Craig moved to hear the Article, seconded by Diana Senturia. The article passed by voice vote.

- Frank Miller asked which signs this would replace. Craig said only the signs in the Village.
- Mel Reis asked if the \$5000 included the installation, Steve Engle said the project is a collaboration with the highway department and the residents. The project only includes the black and white signs. The installation is volunteer effort with the highway department.
- Laura Fickes asked if the signs would keep the historic nature. Engle stated they would be replaced as they are now, with the exception of the north and south end of the village. A logo is needed for those signs.
- Gillian Sewake asked why this is a separate article and will there be community input for a logo. Craig said that this is a separate article to include the residents in the process.
- Geoffrey Freid asked where he should go if he wanted to participate in the process. Engle said that residents should give Engle their email.

**Article 5:** Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$9,629.00, to be raised in taxes, to support the following organizations? These requests are the same amounts as requested in 2022.

Jerome Senturia moved to accept the Article, seconded by Diana Senturia. The article passed by voice vote.

Jonathan Kaplan moved to amend the article to add the Peacham Fire District in the amount of \$3000, seconded by Jerome Senturia. The ammendment passed by voice vote. The new total is \$12,629.00

- Mel Reis spoke on behalf of the Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging.
- Jonathan Kaplan stated he didn't put a request in for the Peacham Fire District #1. He said they would like to ask the residents for the \$3000 as last year.
- Adam Kane spoke on behalf of the Fairbanks Museum.
- Andrea Kane asked why Greenup Vermont is in the budget and as an appropriation. Craig explained the appropriation is for the State organization, the budget is for Peacham's effort.



-Joel Wright asked how do appropriations make it on the Warning, Richard Browne, Selectboard Member stated they have to make a request by a certain date and if it's okay, it makes it on the warning.

-Becky Jensen asked why the non-Peacham items are separated by the Peacham items. Browne stated the board felt this was the best way to represent it to the voters.

ORGANIZATION	Request	Services to Peacham (see agency reports for further information)
Caledonia Home Health Care and Hospice	\$2,000.00	Home health care; hospice; long-term care; maternal/child care; homemaking; nursing visits; home health aides; therapy visits.
Catamount Arts	\$500.00	Arts education, live performances, films, festivals, gallery exhibits, First Night.
Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium	\$650.00	Provides free unlimited general admission for all Peacham residents; offers science education, exhibits, and weather/information services.
Kingdom Animal Shelter	\$500.00	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	\$660.00	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.	\$769.00	Mental health services (request based on \$1.05 per resident from 2010 census).
Northeast Kingdom Youth Services	\$500.00	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.	\$500.00	Regional public transportation services with scheduled services to Peacham.
SASH	\$2,000.00	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	\$500.00	Counseling, support, and safety for women, children, and families in crisis; safe house network; childcare assistance
VT Assoc. for the Blind and Visually Impaired	\$500.00	Training, services, support for visually impaired Vermonters.
Vermont Green-Up	\$50.00	Green Up Day activities and supplies in Peacham provided by VT Green-Up.
West Danville Community Club	\$500.00	For maintenance of free public beach at Joe's Pond.
<u>Repeat Requests for 2023:</u>	<u>\$9,629.00</u>	

**Article 6:** Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$300, to be raised in taxes, to support Northeast Kingdom Learning Services? This is a new consideration for 2023.

{Provides learning and childcare services throughout the Northeast Kingdom.}

Cathy Browne moved to accept the article, Diana Senturia seconded. The article passed by voice vote.

-Richard Browne spoke of the history to this organization as an appropriation.

-Cathy Browne spoke of the nature of this organization from her experience at the Supervisory Union.

-Jerome Senturia spoke about the adult literacy portion of this organization.

-David Edwards spoke on the flaws of the appropriation process.



**Article 7:** Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$1,000, to be raised in taxes, to support Peacham Community Housing?

{Peacham Community Housing provides affordable housing for Peacham residents; historic preservation; support for community development projects including Café, Guild, and Acoustic Music Fest.}

Diana Senturia moved to accept the Article, seconded by Mark Clough. Dave Edwards called the question, seconded by Andra Hibbert. The Article passed by voice vote.

- Mark Clough asked if the Selectboard was supportive of affordable housing. Richard Browne, Selectboard stated that the Selectboard as a whole supports Peacham Community Housing.
- Morgan Gold, secretary of PCH, spoke about how PCH is working with Rural Edge to transfer ownership of the Academy Apartments and the Science Building to increase more affordable housing in the village.
- Ron Craig spoke that PCH turned down a generous offer for the green, he asked what the \$1000 would go towards with the transition to Rural Edge. Gold spoke that the funds would go to the operating costs of PCH.
- Mary Daly spoke that she was turned down by PCH when she applied to live at the senior housing.
- Bob Hansen spoke that the transition will keep all prior covenants on the properties. Rural edge pays taxes on all its properties. Rural Edge has no interest in doing anything on the green.
- Barry Lawson spoke that he sensed tension between the Selectboard and PCH. He asked if the board had a different view for the green. Craig said the green would stay as it is. He continued that the tennis court would be overflow parking and ADA access provided to the gym.
- Gillian Sewake said the offer was rejected and that there was a specific plan for the that space. Craig stated that the Town Hall was in need of repairs, ADA access is one of the needed repairs. Sewake asked if this was a done deal. Browne, Selectboard, stated that the board and PCH are still in negotiations for an easement to the tennis court area. Gold stated that PCH is willing to help create access.
- Joe Alper asked why PCH rejected the Town's offer. Alfred Dedam stated he was the Vice President of PCH and a Selectboard Member. He stated that the town did a lot of due diligence to make this go through. The town was operating on the notion that PCH was in discussion as a board, he continued that PCH did not have discussions about this.
- Betsy McKay asked that we focused on the Article.

**Article 8:** Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$1,500, to be raised in taxes, to support the Peacham Historical Association?

{The Peacham Historical Association provides; community programs, exhibits, preservation of historic archives and collections, Peacham research, and publications.}

Kathy Corcoran moved to accept the Article, seconded by Diana Senturia. The article passed by voice vote.

- Thomas Galinat spoke that Peacham Historical Association was an invaluable resource. He stated that PHA was responsible for recovering the original meeting minutes of the first Town Meeting, located on the wall of the Narthex in the Meeting House. He continued to say that Steve Galinat and Jutta Scott went out of their way to retrieve the Cowles Map which saved the town \$1000's of dollars in research fees for the \$6000 survey of PCH's green the Town paid to have completed. Galinat encouraged the residents to reach out to PHA and utilized their resources. The residents clapped.

**Article 9:** Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$32,000, to be raised in taxes, to support the Peacham Library? This is an increase of \$6,000 from 2022's appropriation of \$26,000.

{The Peacham Library provides; library services, including books, periodicals, films, audio books, internet access, community programs and gatherings, technology training, used book sale, and municipal meeting space.}

Jonathan Kaplan moved to accept the Article, seconded by Nathan Colpitts. The article passed by voice vote.

Cathy Brown, spoke on behalf of the library to thank the town for their support. She referenced a survey for residents to give input about what residents would like from the library.

**Article 10:** Shall the Town pay its real property taxes to the Town Treasurer on or before November 1st, 2023, with delinquent taxes having interest charges of one percent per month and with an eight percent penalty charged against them from the due date?

Diana Senturia moved to accept the Article, seconded by Morgan Gold. The article passed by voice vote.

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

Ron Craig nominated Rebecca Washington. There were no other nominations. **Rebecca Washington** elected Town Clerk by a voice vote. The residents clapped with vigor.

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

Peter Craig nominated Rebecca Washington. Diana Senturia moved to closed nominations, seconded by Jock Gill. Nominations were closed. **Rebecca Washington** elected Town Treasurer and Tax Collector by a voice vote.

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

Betsy McKay nominated Peter Craig. There were no other nominations. Ron Craig moved to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot. Seconded by Jerry Senturia. The motion was passed by voice vote. The Moderator directed the Clerk to cast one ballot for Peter Craig. **Peter Craig** elected Selectboard Member by ballot vote.

-Richard Browne encouraged a younger, non-male to run for Selectboard next year.

**Article 14:** To elect a Lister for a term of one year.

There were no nominations. This position remains open and will need to be appointed by the Selectboard.

-Betsy McKay spoke that being a Lister is a great opportunity to meet everyone in town. You get paid and get to work directly with the Town Clerk. She encouraged those to consider this position. The residents clapped.

**Article 15:** To elect a Lister for a term of three years.

Betsy McKay nominated Nathan Colpitts. There were no other nominations. Diana Senturia moved to have the Clerk cast one ballot, seconded by Barry Lawson. The motion was passed by voice vote. The Moderator directed the Clerk to cast one ballot for Nathan Colpitts. **Nathan Colpitts** elected Lister by ballot vote. The residents clapped.



**Article 16:** To elect an Auditor for a term of 3 years.

Beatrice Ring nominated Jill Hurst. Diana Senturia moved to close nominations and cast one ballot. Seconded by Jock Gill. The motion was passed by voice vote. The Moderator directed the Clerk to cast one ballot for Jill Hurst. **Jill Hurst** elected Auditor by ballot vote. The residents clapped.

**Article 17:** To elect a First Constable for a term of 1 year.

Ron Craig nominated John Sheehan. There were no other nominations. **John Sheehan** elected First Constable by voice vote.

**Article 18:** To elect a Second Constable for a term of 1 year.

Ron Craig nominated Joe Layn. There were no other nominations. **Joe Layn** elected Second Constable by voice vote.

**Article 19:** To elect a Delinquent Tax Collector for a term of one year.

Ron Craig nominated John Sheehan. There were no other nominations. **John Sheehan** elected Delinquent Tax Collector by voice vote.

**Article 20:** To elect a name for the 2023 Town of Peacham plow truck for a term of three years.

Rose Dedam nominated Voldemort's Plow on behalf of the 3-4 class, Alfred Dedam nominated Lightning on behalf of the K-1 class, Erin Lane nominated Snow Storm on behalf of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class, Daniel Devine nominated Unicorn Egg on behalf of the Pre-K class, Rebecca Washington nominated Robert Frost on behalf of the 5-6 class. There were no other nominations. **Robert Frost** wins by rank choice voting. The residents clapped.

Karen Gallas moved to suspend the rules, seconded by Erin Lane, the motion passed by voice vote.

Results: (50% or majority needed to win, 88 total votes cast, 45 or more votes needed to win):

-**Robert Frost 45**

-Unicorn Egg 23

-Snow Storm 11

-Lightning 7

-Voldemort's Plow 2

-Tim McKay, Moderator, suggested to suspend the rules for a simplified rank choice vote. McKay explained how ranked choice voting works.

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

-Kathy Corcoran spoke that she has lived in Peacham for 30 years. She stated that the turnout for Town Meeting is much lower than she remembers.

-Gillian Sewake spoke that a group of community members are meeting to try to improve the democratic process in Peacham. Sewake stated that two dates were set on April 11<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Peacham Library to meet to strengthen democracy.

-Wendy Morgan asked if the meetings are going to be in-person or hybrid? Sewake said hybrid.

-Jock Gill spoke about the Energy Committee and community solar projects. Gill also stated that NEK Broadband has started their project and residents should have highspeed internet by

quarter 4 of this year.

-Jeff Berwick, Fire Chief, thanked the residents for the support of the Fire Department. He said Mark Simikaski, Shane Thresher, and Bob Campbell were completing their Fire Fighter 1 course. He encouraged residents to join the department. The residents clapped.

-Dave Stauffer spoke on behalf of the Cemetery Committee. The pine trees were shredded at the cemeteries. He said there would be a community clean up of the cemeteries this spring.

Sam McCleod stated this would be an excellent opportunity for a community service project with the school. Stauffer suggest April 22<sup>nd</sup>, for the clean up date.

-Dave Edwards thanked the committee and donors to the Peacham Emergency Relief Fund.

-Rebecca Washington thanked Betsy McKay and Rick Scholes as outgoing listers and Tom Galinat as outgoing Clerk. The residents clapped.

-Thomas Galinat encouraged the Selectboard and Peacham Community Housing to continue working together to find a common goal for the green. He stated several ARPA projects were held up due to this potential purchase. He was hopeful the two groups could continue working together. The residents clapped.

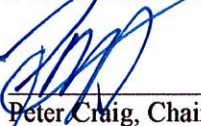
Diana Senturia motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Ron Craig. The motion passed by voice vote.

The Meeting was adjourned at 12:02PM.

The foregoing is approved and attested by:

**Peacham Selectboard:**

**Moderator:**


  
Peter Craig, Chair

  
Timothy McKay

  
Richard Browne

**Town Clerk:**

  
Alfred Dedam

  
Thomas Galinat