

TOWN OF PEACHAM, VERMONT

Minutes of the 2025 Annual Town Meeting

The legal voters of the Town of Peacham met at the Peacham Meetinghouse in Peacham, Vermont on Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 10:00 am.

Moderator Tim McKay opened the meeting and turned Article 1 over to Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam.

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.

Annette Lorraine nominated Tim McKay. There were no other nominations.

Tim McKay was elected as Moderator by a voice vote.

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

Auditor Jill Hurst explained that the Auditors' report is in the town report. The books have been audited and everything is in accordance with town meeting votes and the votes of the Selectboard to implement town meeting decisions.

Article 3: Shall the voters approve total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$4,093,999.05, of which \$1,474,187.85 shall be raised by taxes and \$2,619,811.20 by nontax revenue?

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Town Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Washington explained that the amount to be raised in taxes is up since 2024 and that there are several driving factors. First, there are two paving projects scheduled for 2025, one of which is a rebuild of the Peacham-Danville Road near Ewell's Pond. Additionally, 2025 is the first year of the new maintenance plan to shim and overlay one mile of paved road per year. The town has ten miles of paved roads and a shim and overlay theoretically lasts for ten years, so the plan is to shim and overlay a mile of road per year. The town is starting to transition from leasing dump trucks to owning them and one of the previously-leased 10 wheeler dump trucks is scheduled to be bought out in 2025. There is also a \$50,000 increase in health insurance costs due to a 10% increase in price and changes to current employees' health insurance plans.

Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam further explained the transition from leasing dump trucks to owning them, clarifying that there has been an issue with the supply chain which makes getting new trucks as scheduled a problem. There have also not been the anticipated savings that the town was hoping for when switching to the lease program. Moving forward, the trucks will be financed and kept for six years instead of being leased for three years.

Ken Danielson asked if the paving costs are based on a contract price for ten years or if there will be increases in future years. Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam explained that it is not based on a contract price and that it will go out to bid every year.

Dave Stauffer asked about FEMA in the budget. Town Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Washington explained that \$423,308 was spent on FEMA projects in 2024. The town took out a line of credit to cover those costs until the FEMA/state reimbursements come through. The 2025 budget includes a revenue (money coming in from FEMA/state) and an offsetting expenditure (payback of the line of credit). The amount to be spent on further repairs in 2025 is unknown.

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Auditor Charlotte Mooney pointed out that there was no footnote or mention in the Selectboard report of the Selectboard salaries going from \$2,000 to \$2,500.

Kathy Buck asked about the Peacham Pond Grant line in the budget. Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam explained that it's a state grant for the Peacham Pond greeter program which aims to protect against aquatic invasive species.

Auditor Jill Hurst asked why the \$10,000 for afternoon childcare was moved from the school budget to the town budget and why it was not warned as a separate article. She explained that, because the \$10,000 for 2025 is only for July 1, 2025-December 31, 2025, the amount would increase to \$20,000 in 2026, if level funded. School Board Vice Chair Andra Hibbert explained that the School Board worked really hard to get the budget under the excess spending threshold to avoid a tax penalty. The afternoon childcare program that was budgeted for \$55,000 was cut from the school budget and would now be paid for partially by the town's \$10,000 contribution and partially by the parents who use the program. Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam explained that there was a discussion at the Selectboard meeting about whether to include it in the budget or to have it warned as a separate article. He felt that the people who this decision would affect the most wouldn't be able to be at Town Meeting to represent themselves and that it should be included in the budget so that it didn't become a lightning rod issue. He would like to keep striving to make Peacham affordable and attainable for all, including working families.

Adam Kane asked how the instability of the federal government might pose a risk to federal funding in the budget and how the town plans to mitigate the risk. Town Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Washington explained that \$416,005 was spent on FEMA-eligible road repairs and \$413,552 was spent on FHWA (state)-eligible road repairs in 2024. The town is currently working with FEMA and the state to get reimbursed. If the FEMA funding does not come through, Washington suggested that the town would potentially roll the money that was borrowed to cover costs into a longer-term loan to be paid by taxes.

Jonathan Kaplan asked how much money would moving the \$10,000 for afternoon childcare to the town budget save the taxpayers in penalties. School Board Vice Chair Andra Hibbert explained that for every dollar per pupil that is over the threshold, the taxpayers would have to pay two dollars.

Cathy Browne asked for clarification on the \$10,000 for childcare becoming \$20,000 in 2026. Auditor Jill Hurst and Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam explained that it is due to the town's budget being on a calendar year and the school's budget being on a fiscal year. The \$10,000 in the 2025 budget would help pay for six months of childcare starting on July 1, 2025 and going through the end of the calendar year. The budget in 2026, if level funded, would cover a full twelve months of childcare and would therefore be \$20,000.

Auditor Jill Hurst clarified that she completely supports the incredibly hard work done by the Selectboard and thinks that afternoon childcare is really important, but that not having something as a separate vote because it may be controversial is problematic for purposes of democracy.

Ellie Blachly clarified that the \$10,000 for afternoon childcare would normally be spent in the school budget anyway and is just being moved to the town budget to avoid a penalty.

School Treasurer Morgan Gold explained that there are so many different pieces to the school tax rate but that non-traditional school funding costs that can slide from the school budget to the town budget will collectively save the taxpayers money.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Kathy Corcoran moved the article and Diana Senturia seconded. The article had already been moved and seconded and discussed. Article 3 passed by a voice vote.

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Article 4: Shall the voters establish a reserve fund to be called the Fire Department Capital Equipment Fund to be used for the purpose of purchasing fire equipment in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804?

Jerry Senturia moved the article. Seconded by Dick Browne.

Fire Chief Jeff Berwick explained that there used to be an equipment fund back in the 1980s, but the documentation of the fund being established back then could not be found. In order for money to be set aside in a reserve fund, the fund needs to be re-established by the voters.

Article 4 passed by a voice vote.

Article 5: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$50,000, to be raised in taxes, to fund the Fire Department Capital Equipment Fund?

Jerry Senturia moved the article. Seconded by Cynther Greene.

Fire Chief Jeff Berwick explained that the Selectboard decided to put aside \$50,000 per year for the next three years to be used towards the purchase of a new fire engine in 2027. The tanker will be paid off by then and the town will start seven years of payments for the engine.

Mark Simakaski mentioned that the Fire Department is expensive to run and that they have consistently been applying for FEMA grants. A grant for about \$205,000 to replace out-of-date equipment was received in 2023 and was successful in almost bringing the department up to operational standards.

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

Article 6: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$9,929, to be raised in taxes, to support the following organizations? These requests are the same amounts as requested in 2024.

ORGANIZATION	Request	Services to Peacham (see agency reports 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	\$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

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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 VT Green-Up.
West Danville Community Club	\$500	For maintenance of free public beach at Joe's Pond.
Repeat Requests for 2025:	\$9,929	

The article was moved by Dick Browne. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

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.

Kathy Griffin thanked the voters for their continued support of Northeast Kingdom Youth Services.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 6 passed by a voice vote.

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

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Peacham Community Housing Secretary Morgan Gold thanked the voters for their continued support and explained that PCH is a non-profit that tries to help bring more affordable housing to town and to support and sustain the community through the farmer's market, the cafe, and the guild.

Cathy Browne asked why PCH's appropriation request was in its own article even though the amount requested had not changed since last year. Town Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Washington explained that, similar to the past several years, the Peacham-based organizations, new requests, and changes to the amount requested were all broken out into their own articles.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 7 passed by a voice vote.

Article 8: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$2,000, to be raised in taxes, to support the Peacham Historical Association?

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 8 passed by a voice vote.

Article 9: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$35,600, to be raised in taxes, to support the Peacham Library? This is an increase of \$1,800 from 2024's appropriation of \$33,800.

Annette Lorraine moved the article. Seconded by Rick Scholes.

Peacham Library Board President Barb Schoolcraft thanked the voters for their ongoing support and explained that in 2024 the library had close to 8,800 visitors and hosted 280 programs and events. The community room was used for a wide variety of community events and programming. The additional \$1,800 will be used to help cover cost-of-living increases for staff as well as the cost of materials and services.

Bess O'Brien encouraged support of the library and explained that there is an upcoming free flood recovery writing workshop scheduled at the Peacham Library and the Barnet Library.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 9 passed by a voice vote.

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Article 10: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$5,000, to be raised in taxes, to support Peacham Fire District #1? This is a decrease of \$18,000 from 2024's appropriation of \$23,000.

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Annette Lorraine.

Peacham Fire District #1 Prudential Committee Member Jonathan Kaplan thanked the voters for the \$23,000 appropriation in 2024 and explained that this year's decrease was a planned decrease.

Peacham Fire District #1 Treasurer Bruce Westcott explained that the Fire District is in need of a new prudential committee member.

Article 10 passed by a voice vote.

Article 11: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$750, to be raised in taxes, to support Window Dressers?

Dick Browne moved the article. Seconded by Rick Scholes.

Energy Committee member Tom Bryer, who is also one of the local coordinators for Window Dressers, explained that Window Dressers is a joint volunteer program between Danville, Peacham, Barnet, and Ryegate that builds relatively-inexpensive, custom-made interior window inserts. They try to make them affordable for everyone and everyone is expected to help build them. Window Dressers is a non-profit out of Rockland, Maine that supplies the tools and materials and the goal is to give 25% of them away. The inserts can really help, especially in older homes with single-pane windows. Over the past three years, 185 inserts went to 24 homes in Peacham.

Rick Scholes added that the five window inserts that they got for their odd-shaped windows really work and are way less expensive than other inserts.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 11 passed by a voice vote.

Article 12: Shall the Town pay its real property taxes to the Town Treasurer on or before November 1, 2025, with delinquent taxes having interest charges of one percent per month and with an eight percent penalty charged against them from the due date?

Peter Craig moved the article. Seconded by Diana Senturia.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 12 passed by a voice vote.

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

Kathy Corcoran nominated Alfred Dedam.

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

Alfred Dedam was elected for a term of three years.

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

Anna Carvalho nominated Will Kempton.

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

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Will Kempton 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 two-year term.

Morgan Gold nominated Christian Snow.

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

Christian Snow was elected for one year to complete a vacated two-year term.

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

Barb Schoolcraft nominated Jean Dedam.

Kathy Corcoran moved to cease the nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Jean Dedam. Seconded by Diana Senturia. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Jean Dedam was elected for a term of three years.

Article 17: To elect a Lister for a term of two years to complete a vacated three-year term.

Nicole Wolfgang nominated Clarissa Kendall.

Annette Lorraine moved to cease the nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Clarissa Kendall. Seconded by Diana Senturia. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Clarissa Kendall was elected for a term of two years to complete a vacated three-year term.

Article 18: To elect an Auditor for a term of three years.

Jill Hurst nominated Robert Starbuck.

Nicole Wolfgang moved to cease the nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Robert Starbuck. Seconded by Diana Senturia. The motion was passed by voice vote and the clerk cast one ballot.

Robert Starbuck was elected for a term of three years.

Article 19: 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 20: To elect a Second Constable for a term of one year.

Ron Craig nominated Nate Giroux.

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

Article 21: 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 22: To elect a name for the 2024 Town of Peacham pickup truck.

The names put forward by classes at the Peacham School were Snowblower, Toad the Truck, Pikachu, and Gravel.

Toad the Truck was elected by a majority hand vote.

Article 23: Shall the Town adopt the following Declaration of Inclusion?

The Town of Peacham condemns racism and welcomes all persons regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age or disability, or socioeconomic status, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community.

As a town, we formally condemn discrimination in all its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all our actions, policies and operating procedures reflect this commitment.

The Town of Peacham is and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions.

Jerry Senturia moved the article. Seconded by Karen Lewis.

Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam explained that the Declaration of Inclusion was presented to the Selectboard by an organization a couple of years ago and that the Selectboard at the time decided not to adopt it because there's nothing in the declaration that's contrary to how the town has been operating. The organization has since come back to encourage the Selectboard to adopt the declaration. Dedam felt that the town was already a very welcoming community to all persons listed in the declaration other than socioeconomic status, specifically because of the pushback that occurred when Peacham Community Housing presented its plan to develop the science building as affordable housing. During the Selectboard's discussion, Selectboard Member Molly Willard suggested that the declaration could be more of an aspirational document. The Selectboard did not feel like it could speak on behalf of the town's aspirations and decided to put it on the warning for the town to vote on.

Jerry Senturia explained that, given the current climate with statements coming out of Washington that are anti-inclusion, he strongly supports the declaration.

Rose Dedam suggested that, in addition to being aspirational, the declaration could be used as a decision-making guide.

Sabrina Kaufman explained that the declaration means a lot to her and that she's felt nothing but support and welcome since coming out last year.

Moderator Tim McKay reread the article. Article 23 passed by a voice vote.

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Article 24: To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

Fire Chief Jeff Berwick recognized the members of the Peacham Fire Department for their hard work protecting the town and had them stand up for a round of applause. Julie Hansen thanked the Fire Department for their rescue services as well.

Julie Hansen asked if the Declaration of Inclusion would be posted somewhere in town. Selectboard Chair Alfred Dedam said that it could be posted on the wall at town hall and on the town website.

Ellie Blachly encouraged everyone to keep their eyes peeled for events that the Peacham Agrarian Society will be putting on.

Betsy McKay spoke about the Peacham Cafe being in existence for over 11 years and encouraged everyone to become an annual Friend of the Peacham Cafe and to commit to a specific yearly donation. Money that's donated by the friends goes towards monthly expenses such as electricity and internet, which helps make the cafe viable for the operator.

Neil Monteith explained that there is grant money available to Peacham farmers through the Peacham Farm Support Grant and that applications will be available shortly. The grant was funded through an anonymous donation around 30 years ago and is not taxpayer dollars.

Emergency Management Coordinator Neil Monteith said that the town is in the process of updating its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and there is a survey on the town website for residents to take. There will also be a community input meeting as the plan is being developed.

Sabrina Kaufman explained that there is money available through the Peacham Emergency Relief Fund for those that are having trouble paying bills. Applications are available at the Town Clerk's office and on the town website.

Karen Lewis gave information on jobs available with NEK Broadband.

Mark Clough encouraged everyone to keep housing in town on their radar and explained that Peacham needs more housing, especially for families.

Ken Danielson said that he supports affordable housing and explained that there's room for expansion of housing in the village and that the state does not mandate what housing looks like. He suggested that the town could encourage the appearance of structures in town to maintain the entire appearance of the town.

Jonathan Kaplan explained that April 13th would have been Alan Greenleaf's 80th birthday and that there will be a concert at the library where Alan's music will be played.

Jen Surat thanked Dina Danielson for her leadership on the Winter Carnival Committee and explained that the committee is looking for new members.

Alfred Dedam explained that there will be a pumpkin growing contest during one of the farmer's markets this year and encouraged everyone to start growing their pumpkins.

Dick Browne thanked the Selectboard, Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, and all the town employees for their hard work.

Alfred Dedam thanked the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, and Highway Foreman for their hard work.


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Rick Scholes moved to adjourn. Seconded by Ken Danielson.

Meeting adjourned at 11:52 am.

The foregoing is approved and attested by:

Peacham Selectboard:



Alfred Dedam



Peter Craig

Molly Willard



Will Kempton



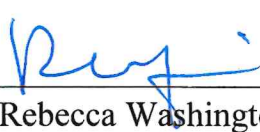
Christian Snow

Moderator:



Timothy McKay

Town Clerk:



Rebecca Washington