

Town of Pomfret Selectboard
DRAFT Special Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2025

Present: Benjamin Brickner, John Peters, Steve Chamberlin, Meg Emmons, Emily Grube

Public: Frank Rogers, Betsy Siebeck, Eric Chase, Bob Crean, Neil Lamson, Jim Potter

1. Ben called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.
2. Agenda Review – John moved and Steve that an executive session to discuss contracts be added immediately before adjournment. Unanimous.
3. Public Comment – Neil praised the road crew for keeping meticulous time sheet records, which has enabled the town promptly to receive FEMA reimbursement following disaster repair work. Neil urged that this practice continue as well as taking many photos of damage and following the town’s purchasing policy. Neil also thanked the Selectboard for keeping public records, specifically the meeting minutes, accessible to all. Jim Potter questioned why the road crew receives a paid holiday for Town Meeting Day, even though Pomfret no longer has in-person town meeting. Town Meeting Day remains a state holiday; Pomfret’s personnel policy would need to be revised to remove it as a paid holiday. Jim asked how the town could return to in-person town meeting. A petition is required. The petition deadline has already passed for this year’s annual meeting, but one can be submitted for the next town meeting. Jim also feels that out of fairness the Sheriff’s Department should spend more time patrolling back roads and focus less on the town’s paved roads. Ben will contact Sheriff Palmer in this regard. Ben also will follow up with Senator Alison Clarkson about lowering the default speed limit on back roads. This topic came up at the legislator Q&A session last month.
4. Road Foreman Report – Frank is happy to have had some better weather and thus has been working on equipment repair, etc.
5. Items for Discussion or Vote
 - a. Highway Truck Bids – After discussion Meg moved and Steve seconded ordering the Freightliner 114SD Plus 10-wheel/tandem truck with standard transmission and a blade, at the expected cash purchase price of \$292,458. Unanimous. Frank will request a purchase agreement from the vendor for the Selectboard to review and approve at the February 5 meeting.
 - b. FY 2026 Budget Discussion and Approval – All remaining tentative figures were review and confirmed. Betsy Siebeck, who walks Pomfret Road regularly, feels that traffic remains dangerous and that the Sheriff’s patrol has not been effective. Betsy also feels that an aggregate reserve fund balance of \$2 million is too high relative to an annual budget of about the same amount. The Selectboard discussed ways that the reserve funds could earn a better return, which would reduce taxes to be raised in future years. Emily suggested the town could engage an investment advisor for this purpose. John moved and Meg seconded approval of the FY 2026 town and highway budget as revised. Unanimous.
 - c. FY 2026 Budget Narrative Discussion and Approval – Ben will update the numbers to reflect the approved FY 2026 budget. Emily moved and Meg seconded approval of the FY 2026 Budget Narrative with those changes. Unanimous.
 - d. 2025 Annual Meeting Warning Discussion and Approval – Ben noted that VLCT recently updated its model warning articles resource. Among the changes was addition of a new

model article that would allow (but not require) that certain elected and appointed position be filled by Vermont residents who do not necessarily live in Pomfret. The Selectboard discussed but ultimately decided not to include this article on the 2025 annual meeting warning. Ben will update the numbers to reflect the approved FY 2026 budget. Meg moved and John seconded approval of the 2025 Annual Meeting Warning with those changes. Unanimous.

- e. Request-to-Cater Permit Approval Delegation – Ben moved and Emily seconded that the Town Clerk or (in her absence) the Assistant Town Clerk be authorized to approve request-to-cater permit applications for recurring events (same applicant and venue; similar start time, end time and expected attendance) where no complaints have been received for prior iterations of the proposed event. Unanimous. New requests will still need to come before the Selectboard. This is a renewal of a delegation that was originally made by the Selectboard on July 6, 2022.
- f. Appointment of Public Officials – The Selectboard and Planning Commission received and accepted Karen Hewitt Osnoe's letter of resignation as Zoning Administrator. The Planning Commission interviewed several candidates and nominated two for the Selectboard's consideration. Ben moved and Emily seconded that Preston Bristow of Woodstock be appointed Zoning Administrator for the Town of Pomfret, to complete the three-year term expiring in March 2027. Unanimous (Steve recused).

- g. Warrants – Emily moved and Steve seconded approval for payment of the following warrants:

25068	\$ 15,235.15	Payroll
25069	\$33,713.86	AP

Unanimous.

- h. Approval of January 15, 2025 Minutes – Emily moved and John seconded approval of the January 15, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Unanimous (Meg not voting).

6. Meeting Wrap Up

- a. Correspondence – Re: the Cherry Hill Road highway access permit, Ben reviewed Karen's notes and spoke with the property owner regarding the intended use of the access. After discussion, the Selectboard will ask the property owner to submit a new application for an agricultural access.
- b. Assignments – Emily to prepare paving RFP with input from Frank; Meg to speak with Ellen and finalize the ARPA accounting; Ben to speak with the Sheriff, notify Mr. Bristow of his appointment, and revert to the Cherry Hill Road property owner regarding a new highway access application.
- c. Agenda for Next Meeting – Paving RFP, Municipal Ethics Code Update, Town Meeting Info Hearing Agenda, New Highway Truck purchase agreement, Mascoma CD renewal, Cherry Hill Road Highway Access Permit.

7. Executive Session

- a. Ben moved and Emily seconded that the Selectboard enter executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(A) to discuss contracts, the premature general public knowledge of which would clearly place the Selectboard and/or another involved at a substantial disadvantage. Unanimous. The Selectboard entered executive session at 10:18 pm.
- b. The Selectboard exited executive session at 10:56 pm, with no decisions having been made therein.

- 8. Adjournment – John moved and Meg seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 10:56 pm.