

Town of Pomfret Selectboard
Special Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2025

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

Public: Cynthia Hewitt, Norm Buchanan, Ruth Buchanan, Neil Lamson, Ellen DesMeules

1. Ben called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Agenda Review – Ben moved and Meg seconded that presentation of a Distinguished Public Service Award be added immediately before Item 4A (FY 2026 Town and Local Agreement Tax Rates). Unanimous.
3. Public Comment – None.
4. Items for Discussion or Vote
 - a. Distinguished Public Service Award – Neil Lamson on behalf of the Town of Pomfret presented a Distinguished Service Award to Norm Buchanan for his 20 years (and counting) of service to the town as an elected Lister. Neil noted that the Lister position is often difficult, always time-consuming, and inevitably underappreciated. He observed that while one might expect property owners to welcome news of increased property values, Norm's decades of experience suggest otherwise. The Selectboard expressed its appreciation for Norm's professionalism and patience in fulfilling this essential role.
 - b. FY 2026 Town and Local Agreement Tax Rates – Based on the municipal grand list as of July 7, the amount of taxes to be raised by the budget approved by the voters at town meeting, and the number of veterans' exemptions claimed this year, Ellen determined that the FY 2026 town tax rate should be \$0.3973 per \$100 assessed value and that the FY 2026 local agreement rate should be \$0.0008 per \$100 assessed value. Thus, the total FY 2026 town tax rate should be \$0.3981 per \$100 assessed value (up 12.4% from \$0.3541 last year). Steve moved and Meg seconded the foregoing. Unanimous. Tax bills will be mailed later this week and the first installment will be due at the town office on or before 2:30 PM on August 15, 2025.^[1]
 - c. FY 2026 Tax Bill Insert – The Selectboard reviewed a draft letter to accompany tax bills explaining how the town and school tax rates are set and how they have changed since last year. The letter is substantially the same as the FY 2025 insert, with dates and rates updated. Ben moved and Meg seconded approval of the insert with changes to reflect the tax rates approved earlier in the meeting. Unanimous.
 - d. Homestead Declaration Late Filing Penalty – Property owners whose homes meet the definition of a Vermont homestead must file a Homestead Declaration annually by April 15. The state allows towns to impose a penalty of up to 3% of the education tax for homesteaders who file their homestead declarations late. The large difference between homestead and non-homestead tax rates this year creates an incentive for residents not to file. As of the meeting, 76 town residents believed to be homesteaders still had not filed their Homestead Declarations. It was noted that

^[1] **Editor's Note:** The Department of Taxes published the FY 2026 education tax rates earlier in July. The homestead education rate will be \$1.6511 per \$100 assessed value (down 0.9% from \$1.6654 last year) and the non-homestead education rate will be \$1.3431 per \$100 assessed value (down 2.9% from \$1.3837 last year). As a result, the total homestead tax rate will be 2.0492 (up 1.5% from \$2.0195 last year) and the total non-homestead rate will be \$1.7412 per \$100 assessed value (up 0.2% from \$1.7378 last year)

the aforementioned incentive mainly benefits higher income residents because a Homestead Declaration is necessary to claim the income-based property tax credit. The Selectboard determined not to impose a late filing penalty as doing so might discourage late filers from filing at all (filings are accepted by the state until October 15 each year). As they have done in prior years, the Listers will continue to send reminders to non-filers and lists of non-filers to the state for investigation and enforcement.

- e. Pomfret Road Slide Emergency Grant Application – Ben presented the grant agreement from VTrans. The grant amount is less than the anticipated total cost based on construction and engineering contracts, but VTrans has indicated that they routinely amend grant agreements once total costs are known. This understanding has been confirmed in writing via email with VTrans. The difference between the current grant amount and anticipated cost is approximately \$50,000. John moved and Steve seconded approving the grant agreement as presented and authorizing Ben to sign on the Selectboard’s behalf. Unanimous.
 - f. Pomfret Road Slide Construction Contract – Frank reported that Northwoods is proceeding with scheduling the work. The construction agreement will be signed once VTrans’ signed grant agreement is received. No further discussion or vote was required at this time.
 - g. Temporary Materials Storage Agreement – A revised version of the Temporary Material Storage Agreement was discussed. The proposed site is off Pomfret Road, near the Pomfret Fire Station. There is some confusion regarding the land ownership, as the parcel map shows a different owner than the one Frank had been communicating with. Ben will confirm with Becky on Monday. The agreement itself was discussed, including a new provision to protect an apple tree on the site, and pushing the end date to October 15 to provide breathing room. The town will restore the land to its prior condition after that time. No vote was needed immediately, pending confirmation of the counterparty.
 - h. Old Equipment Trailer Sale Ad – The draft advertisement for the sale of an old equipment trailer was reviewed. The only change was to make it a sealed envelope bid process, with offers due by noon on August 4, 2025 at the town office. Frank will distribute the ad from the highway email address early next week.
 - i. Warrants – John moved and Emily seconded approval for payment of the following warrants:

26002	\$ 8,271.48	Payroll
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Unanimous.
5. Meeting Wrap Up
- a. Correspondence

TRORC informed us about a grant program to mitigate stormwater runoff. The deadline for project ideas is August 15, and will be discussed at the August 6 Selectboard meeting.

TRORC also informed us about the availability of technical assistance to complete grants-in-aid work, including an option to use up to 10% of the grant award for administrative support via Two Rivers. The consensus was that Frank and Ellen could handle the administrative work internally, making the external support unnecessary.

Meg has received one bid on a new refrigerator for the Town Hall, she will solicit another.

Hunter Ulf would like to present two design proposals for the Town Hall at the August 6 Selectboard meeting; Town Hall Revitalization Committee members will also attend.

A decision in the Tunbridge legal trails litigation has been issued and appears to be an unambiguous win for the Town of Tunbridge, confirming that Vermont towns have (and have had) authority to maintain their legal trails. Ben indicated that an appeal to the state supreme court is all but certain.

- b. Review of Assignments – Ben to check with Becky regarding the temporary material storage land ownership, execute the grant paperwork and return to VTrans.
 - c. Agenda for Next Meeting – See Section 6C of the July 2, 2025 Selectboard meeting minutes. Plus Green Stormwater Infrastructure discussion (August 6) and Town Hall design proposals presentation (August 6).
6. Executive Session
- a. Ben moved and Meg 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 at a substantial disadvantage. The Selectboard entered executive session at 7:50 pm.
 - b. John moved and Emily seconded exiting executive session. The Selectboard exited executive session at 8:37 pm, with no decisions having been made therein.
7. Adjournment – John moved and Steve seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm.