

Town of Pomfret Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2026

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

Public: Cynthia Hewitt, Becky Fielder, Ellen DesMeules, Frank Rogers, Doug Tuthill, Neil Lamson, Betsy Rhodes, Christian Randles, Scott Eichler, Marge Wakefield, Cathy Emmons, Bill Emmons

1. **Call to Order** – Ben called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
2. **Executive Session**
 - a. Ben moved and Steve seconded that the Selectboard enter executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3) to discuss the employment of public employees. Unanimous. The Selectboard entered executive session at 6:01 pm.
 - b. The Selectboard exited executive session at 7:02 pm, with no decisions having been made therein.
3. **Agenda Review** – None.
4. **Public Comment** – None.
5. **FY 2027 Budget Informational Meeting** – Ben explained that the Selectboard is considering creating a position to consolidate several administrative functions including assistant treasurer, assistant clerk, assistant to the Selectboard, and possibly other duties depending on availability of sufficient staffing and volunteers in the future. The Selectboard discussed the need for additional professional services in property assessment and accounting. Betsy Rhodes raised questions regarding unpaid ambulance bills, noting the amounts have increased sharply in recent years. Ben explained that Woodstock recently changed their collections process and, as a result, these amounts hopefully will decline in future years. Doug Tuthill suggested exploring the use of six-wheel trucks versus ten-wheel trucks for potential cost savings. Steve explained the rationale for using ten-wheel trucks in terms of load capacity, sanding efficiency, plowing performance, and overall cost implications.
6. **Road Foreman Report** – Frank reported that the road crew has been busy due to frequent inclement weather. Truck #3 experienced a bed chain issue and Truck #5 had hydraulic problems. The Selectboard has received positive feedback from residents regarding road maintenance quality and crew performance during recent winter storms.
7. **Items for Discussion or Vote**
 - a. **Certificate of Deposit Rollover** – Ellen will work with Ben to obtain the best rate available from Mascoma Bank for the funds in the recently matured certificate of deposit. This may entail rolling into a new certificate of deposit or holding the funds in an interest bearing sweep account.
 - b. **Law Enforcement Services** – Doug Tuthill, the town Constable, expressed the need for a certified police officer to address more serious crimes in town, particularly drug dealing and theft. Doug suggested adding a warning article reinstating law enforcement authority to the Constable, authority that was removed by town vote in 2015. Discussion will continue at the January 21 meeting.
 - c. **FY 2027 Budget Discussion** – The Selectboard continues to await final insurance pricing. The Selectboard agreed that if quotes are not received by January 21, the budget will assume a 5% increase relative to current rates. Emily noted the need to

involve an engineer in road repairs, and the Selectboard agreed that funds can be drawn from the paving reserve. The Windsor County tax rate will not be known until January 21. Ben will confirm dispatch fees with Woodstock, allotted funds with the Listers and Fire Department, and tax deadlines with Ellen. Selectboard members were urged to review the budget for potential reductions between now and the January 21 meeting, at which time the budget is expected to be finalized for a vote on town meeting day.

- d. **2025 Annual Report Deliverables** – Ben reviewed the preliminary warning. The Selectboard discussed and approved adding a 1% local option tax on sales, meals/alcoholic beverages, and rooms to the warning. The rationale for proposing this article to the voters is to diversify away from heavy reliance on property taxes to fund the municipal budget. The Selectboard also discussed and approved adding an article allowing Vermont residents who are not Pomfret residents to be elected or appointed to some town offices. The rationale for proposing this article to the voters is the increasing difficulty of finding willing volunteers for some unpaid or low-paid local positions.
- e. **VTrans Small Scale Local Highway Safety Grant** – The Selectboard discussed applying for a grant (up to \$50,000 with no local match required) to improve road safety. Eligible uses for the grant include blind striping, sign work, replacing non-compliant guardrails, removing trees, and removing large objects and bulges in roads. The Selectboard discussed focusing the application on tree removal in the area around Rudge Road. Emily and Frank will prepare the application. The application deadline is February 2 and the application form is complex, requiring significant effort from the town to complete.
- f. **Emergency Grant Application (Pomfret Road Slope Stabilization Project)** – Jon Harrington, the project engineer, has reviewed and finalized quantity estimates for the Pomfret Road slide repair. Emily moved and Steve seconded that the final figures be forwarded to VTrans for review and to progress toward reimbursement of remediation expenses for which the town is already out of pocket. Unanimous.
- g. **Warrants** – Emily moved and John seconded approval for payment of the following warrants:

26060	\$	18,459.33	Payroll
26061		18,884.78	A/P (includes \$989.57 debit card expenses)
26062		13,073.31	Payroll
26063		34,560.97	A/P
26064		3,080.17	Payroll (accrued but unused vacation pay)

Unanimous.
- h. **Approval of December 17, 2025 Minutes** – John moved and Meg seconded approval of the December 17 meeting minutes as presented. Unanimous.

8. **Meeting Wrap Up**

- a. **Correspondence** – Hunter Ulf is still working on obtaining pricing for the Town Hall renovation. He has had to contact additional contractors after striking out with the initial contractor.
- b. **Review of Assignments** – Ben to follow up on budget items including dispatch fees, Lister funds, Fire Department allotments, and tax deadlines. Emily to review the VTrans grant application. Emily and Frank to prepare the Small Scale Local Highway Safety Grant application for the February 2 deadline.

- c. **Agenda for Next Meeting** – Law Enforcement Services, FY 2027 Budget Approval, 2026 Annual Meeting Warning Approval, North Pomfret (Hewittville) Cemetery Real Estate Transaction, 2026 Highway Mileage Certificate, VTrans Safety Grant Application.
- 9. **Executive Session**
 - a. Ben moved and Meg seconded that the Selectboard enter executive session pursuant to (i) 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(E) to discuss pending civil litigation to which the town is a party, and the premature general public knowledge of which would clearly place the town at a substantial disadvantage, (ii) 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(2) to discuss the negotiating of a real estate purchase, and (iii) 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3) to discuss the employment of public employees. Unanimous. The Selectboard entered executive session at 9:27 pm.
 - b. John moved and Emily seconded exiting executive session. The Selectboard exited executive session at 10:22 pm, with no decisions having been made therein.
- 10. **Attorney Engagement** – Ben moved and John seconded that SP&F Attorneys be engaged to conclude the North Pomfret (Hewittville) Cemetery real estate transaction. Unanimous (Emily not voting).
- 11. **Adjournment** – John moved and Meg seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 10:23 pm.