

Town of Pomfret Selectboard
Annual Town Meeting Informational Hearing Minutes
February 21, 2026

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

Public: Terri Antal, Nancy Atwell, Liza Bernard, Anne Bower, Katie Brickner, Abbie Castriotta, Vern Clifford, Tim Dowd, William Emmons, Gerry Fields, Scott Filliatreault, Kevin Geiger (Town Moderator), Sue Heston, Cynthia Hewitt, Ben Jones, Laura Kent, Sherman Kent, Neil Lamson, Joanna Long, Norwood Long, Sen. Joe Major, Andy Mann, Scott Milne, Jack Peters, Betsy Rhodes, Cory Smith, Cory Swingle, Mary Worrell

1. **Call to Order** – Benjamin Brickner called the town meeting informational hearing to order at 9:03 am. Mr. Brickner thanked attendees for braving the weather to attend. Mr. Brickner explained that, while the gathering is technically a Selectboard meeting, Town Moderator Kevin Geiger would guide the proceedings, with the Selectboard opening and closing the hearing.
2. **Agenda Review** – None.
3. **Discussion of Annual Town Meeting Articles** – Mr. Geiger began by noting the dedication in the 2025 Town Report to John Moore. Mr. Geiger then read the names of those in the community who passed in 2025, and a moment of silence was observed in their memory. Mr. Geiger then proceeded through the Annual Town Meeting Warning article-by-article.

ARTICLE 1 – Election of Town Officers

Mr. Geiger invited any candidates for office to introduce themselves. Benjamin Brickner introduced himself and asked to be considered for Selectboard Member (3-year term). Mr. Brickner noted that he is completing his fourth year on the Selectboard and that it has been a privilege to serve alongside his fellow Selectboard members.

ARTICLE 2 – Non-Resident Eligibility for Local Office

Tim Dowd asked why this article was necessary. Meg Emmons explained the article is intended to give the town an option to look beyond town residents to fill positions if local volunteers cannot be found, noting that the number of volunteers for town positions has been dwindling. Mr. Brickner added that this concern is not theoretical, noting that several positions on the sample ballot have no named candidate, including all three auditor positions and at least one library trustee position.

ARTICLE 3 – Collection of Current Taxes

No discussion.

ARTICLE 4 – Approval of FY 2027 Town and Highway Budget

Neil Lamson asked about the proposed salt budget, noting that during the major snowstorm of January 26–27, the highway crew had kept Pomfret's roads remarkably clear with reduced salt use, and asked whether the town could look forward to more plowing and less salt application going forward. John Peters reported that the Selectboard had consulted Road Foreman Frank Rogers on this question at a prior Selectboard meeting. Frank explained that timing, temperature, traffic and other

conditions during that storm enabled reduced salt usage. Frank explained that his practice is always to use the minimum amount of salt necessary to keep roads in appropriate condition. Joanna Long observed that the contrast between Pomfret's road conditions and those of neighboring West Hartford was immediately apparent when crossing the town line that morning. Mr. Brickner noted that Pomfret's four-member road crew collectively brings decades of combined municipal highway experience to their work, and that it shows in the quality of their work.

ARTICLE 5 – Local Option Tax

Mr. Brickner explained that this article asks voters to approve a 1% add-on to the state sales tax on the three categories that Vermont municipalities are permitted to tax: sales, meals and alcoholic beverages, and rooms. Mr. Brickner explained that the genesis of this proposal is the ongoing discussion about reducing the town's reliance solely on property taxes to fund municipal operations, and that a local option tax would broaden the revenue base because municipal services such as emergency response and road maintenance benefit both residents and visitors alike.

Several questions were asked about the applicability and administration of the local option tax. Mr. Peters and Mr. Brickner explained that the local option tax applies only to transactions already subject to Vermont state sales tax, so if a business is currently required to file a state sales tax return, the 1% local option tax would apply; if not, it would not. Emily Grube explained that the tax follows the location of the sale: if the sale occurs in Pomfret, the revenue goes to Pomfret; if it occurs in Woodstock (which already has a local option tax), it goes to Woodstock. Ms. Emmons explained that the local option tax would apply to online purchases as well. Liza Bernard asked whether voters would need to reapprove the local option tax each year. Mr. Brickner confirmed that, if approved, the tax continues in effect unless and until repealed by voters.

Mr. Lamson asked for an estimate of the revenue that might be generated by the local option tax. Mr. Brickner explained that the estimate is imperfect because Vermont does not publish sales tax data for certain categories in Pomfret due to the small number of local taxpayers, making extrapolation from comparably situated small resort towns necessary. Taking into account that the state retains 25% of local option tax revenue and distributes 75% to municipalities, Mr. Brickner estimated the annual yield at between \$60,000 and \$105,000, with a midpoint of approximately \$82,500. Mr. Brickner noted that while that may not sound like a large amount, relative to the \$1.5 million to be raised in property taxes, a local option tax could make a meaningful impact on the property tax burden.

ARTICLE 6 – Appropriation to Abbott Memorial Library

Mary Worrell, Chair of the Library Board of Trustees, thanked the town for its continued support and explained that after three years of level-funded requests, the Library is requesting an increase of \$2,000 this year, primarily driven by rising costs for popular digital programs. Library staff have also received a cost-of-living raise consistent with what the town has provided to municipal employees. Ms. Long expressed support for the increase given cost-of-living changes over the past several years. Cory Smith, librarian, introduced herself and colleagues Sue Heston and Jenny Satterfield, thanked outgoing trustees Doug Abbott (three years of service) and Betsy Rhodes (twelve years of service), and announced upcoming library programs.

ARTICLE 7 – Appropriation to Pomfret Cemetery Commission

No discussion.

ARTICLE 8 – Appropriation to Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH

No discussion.

ARTICLE 9 – Appropriation to Woodstock Area Council on Aging (d.b.a. The Thompson Senior Center)

No discussion.

ARTICLE 10 – Appropriation to Health Care and Rehabilitation Services

No discussion.

ARTICLE 11 – Appropriation to Empower Up - Windsor Central Mentoring Program

No discussion.

ARTICLE 12 – Appropriation to Spectrum Teen Center

No discussion.

ARTICLE 13 – Appropriation to Pentangle Arts

No discussion.

ARTICLE 14 – Appropriation to Ottauquechee Health Foundation (OHF)

No discussion.

ARTICLE 15 – Appropriation to Women’s Information Service (WISE) of the Upper Valley

No discussion.

ARTICLE 16 – Appropriation to Green Up Vermont

No discussion.

ARTICLE 17 – Re-Appropriation of Unassigned General Fund Balance

Mr. Geiger explained that this article proposes to use \$66,998 of the unassigned general fund balance to reduce taxes to be raised in fiscal year 2027, leaving \$44,665 in the fund balance subject to future reappropriation by voters. Mr. Peters explained that the Selectboard’s practice of applying approximately 60% of the available fund balance each year – rather than the entire amount – is intended to smooth the year-to-year tax rate, since depleting the balance all at once would create a more significant increase in future years when those funds are no longer available. Mr. Dowd asked whether the remaining fund balance functions as a rainy-day fund for unexpected expenses. Mr. Peters clarified that there are separate contingency funds for both the general fund and the highway fund for unanticipated expenses such as equipment failures, and that any use of the remaining general fund balance would require voter approval.

ARTICLE 18 – Designation of Tax Payment Due Dates, Late Payment Interest and Penalty

Laura Kent asked whether the town might explore alternative payment methods beyond check by mail, expressing concern that mailed payments can be significantly delayed and that penalties and interest apply based on the date of receipt rather than the postmark

date. Mr. Brickner confirmed that the town currently accepts payment by debit card and credit card – the latter being subject to a 3% processing fee – and noted that, while peer-to-peer payment services such as Venmo are generally not appropriate for municipal transactions due to audit and financial control requirements, online direct transfer will be explored. Mr. Peters noted that some towns have implemented direct online payment systems, which might benefit both taxpayers and the town by reducing credit card fees and the uncertainties associated with mail delivery.

4. **Other Necessary and Proper Business**

- a. State Senator Joe Major joined the meeting during consideration of Article 8. Mr. Brickner welcomed Sen. Major and invited him to address the assembly.

Sen. Major thanked those attending and commended residents for their civic engagement. He noted that there are currently many unknowns at the state level, particularly regarding property taxes and school redistricting, and indicated that both the House and Senate have developed preliminary redistricting maps. Sen. Major also addressed the situation with the Windsor County Sheriff, noting that law enforcement coverage for the area has been maintained. Sen. Major encouraged residents to contact him with questions or concerns. His information is available at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/people/single/2026/40395>.

Ms. Grube urged Sen. Major to consider supporting at least a delay in implementation of the “road rule,” and to encourage the Land Use Review Board to seek input from affected landowners before the new rules take effect. Sen. Major confirmed that local testimony is welcomed by legislative committees and encouraged any residents wishing to testify on pending bills to contact the relevant committee directly. William Emmons, who chairs the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and is involved in the farming community, discussed the senator’s work on the Agriculture Committee and his growing appreciation for the agricultural sector’s challenges.

- b. Neil Lamson noted that Meg Emmons is not seeking re-election to the Selectboard. Mr. Lamson thanked Ms. Emmons for her service, particularly her work with the Town Hall Revitalization Committee. Ms. Emmons acknowledged that she will remain on the Town Hall Revitalization Committee and intends to continue serving the town in other capacities. Mr. Brickner also thanked Ms. Emmons and noted that it has been a pleasure serving alongside her on the Selectboard.
- c. Mr. Geiger thanked Alice Lamson for providing homemade doughnuts.
- d. Mr. Peters and Mr. Brickner thanked Cynthia Hewitt for compiling this year’s Town Report entirely on her own in the absence of locally elected auditors.

5. **Adjournment** – There being no other necessary and proper business to come before the assembly, Ms. Emmons moved and Mr. Peters seconded that the town meeting informational hearing be adjourned. The motion carried. The town meeting informational hearing was adjourned at 9:57 am.