

Town of Pomfret Selectboard  
Special Meeting Minutes  
January 8, 2025

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

Public: Frank Rogers, Cynthia Hewitt, Bill Emmons, John Moore, Art Lewin, Jake Astbury, Doug Tuthill, John Moore, Bob Crean, Cathy Emmons, Marge Wakefield, Neil Lamson, Kevin Rice, Ellen DesMeules

1. Ben called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
2. Executive Session
  - a. Steve moved and John seconded that the Selectboard enter executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(A) and (F) to discuss confidential attorney-client communications, the premature general public knowledge of which would clearly place the Selectboard and/or another involved at a substantial disadvantage, and pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3) to discuss the employment of public employees and the appointment of public officials. Unanimous. The Selectboard entered executive session at 6:01 pm.
  - b. The Selectboard exited executive session at 7:05 pm, with no decisions having been made therein.
3. Agenda Review – Meg moved and John seconded that town office parking lot paving be added immediately after the Road Foreman Report. Unanimous.
4. Public Comment – Jake Astbury was introduced as the new chief of the Pomfret-Teago Volunteer Fire Department. Jake and others thanked Kevin Rice for his many years of service.<sup>[\*]</sup>
5. FY 2026 Budget Informational Meeting – Ben explained the FY 2026 town budget will be finalized by the Selectboard later this month for approval by the voters on Town Meeting Day in March. The Selectboard welcomed public comment on the same. Ben further explained that the town budget comprised only about 20% of the total tax bill (before any state adjustments are made), with the school tax comprising the remainder. Paving, town highway equipment (trucks, etc.) and health insurance comprise significant portions of the town budget. The cost of these items has increased substantially faster than general price increases (as measured by changes in the CPI). As a result, these items have had a disproportionate impact on the town budget this year. In addition, the amount of unpaid ambulance bills the town is required to reimburse to Woodstock increased nearly 800% this year. Doug Tuthill commented that \$10,000 is too little for tree removal. It was discussed that this amount would be prioritized for spending next year so that no unused funds revert to the general fund. The town also will explore whether GMP is obligated to assist with tree removal, which would ease the burden on the town. Meg will locate the town's agreement with CVPS (predecessor to GMP) in the land records. Kevin Rice commented that unlike when Pomfret held town meeting from the floor, there no longer was a way for residents to require changes to the budget. They can only vote up or down by Australian ballot. Ben will put an announcement on the listserv and the town website welcoming public input in the draft budget through noon on January 15.

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\* **Editor's Note:** A retrospective of Chief Rice's service was published in the January 9, 2025 edition of *The Vermont Standard*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/5dnbjd2c>.

6. Road Foreman Report – Frank reports things continue going well for the new crew members. The 550 is still at Ted Green Ford for warranty work. Emily pointed out some slide banks may need attention; Frank has noted others. Emily suggested an engineer be consulted to determine the scope of the issue. A new driveway installation on Pomfret Road near Labounty Road has encountered ledge and been allowed an interim access until final work can be completed in the spring.
7. Items for Discussion or Vote
  - a. Town Office Parking Lot Paving – Steve and Frank have been unable to reach Pike about this project. Steve suggests an RFP is needed for this and resurfacing of the bridge at the intersection of Wayside Road and State Route 12. Emily suggests we also include the next installment of Class 2 highway paving. Emily will prepare a draft RFP for review at an upcoming meeting.
  - b. Highway Access Permit (Cherry Hill Road) – Frank believes the permit can be approved without a site visit by the Selectboard. However, it was questioned whether the existing driveway should be discontinued as required by the Highway Ordinance. Selectboard members were encouraged to look in person. To be continued at the January 15 meeting.
  - c. Modine Hot Water Heater Proposal – John moved and Steve seconded approval of the amended proposal from Bartlett & Son Propane for installation of a Modine hot water heater at the town garage, at a total cost of \$3,215.35. Unanimous.
  - d. Highway Truck Bids – Frank received bids for three trucks ranging from \$291,000 to \$313,000. He was disappointed with trade-in values for the equipment to be replaced. Doug suggested selling the trucks privately instead of trading them in. Frank will obtain revised pricing (assuming no trade-in). To be continued at the January 15 meeting.
  - e. Highway Equipment Capital Plan – Neil Lamson explained that the capital plan approved in 2021 assumed a 2.0% annual increase in prices, which has proven unrealistic. The revised plan reflects actual activity since then and now assumes a 7.6% annual increase in prices through FY 2028 and 3.0% thereafter. As a result, funding of the Highway Vehicle Reserve Fund will need to be increased substantially to adequately fund anticipate future purchases without needing to incur indebtedness. Neil and John Moore will doublecheck the revised plan and present the same to the Selectboard at the January 15 meeting.
  - f. Personnel Policy – Discussion postponed to a future meeting. It was noted that the current policy needs updating in several respects.
  - g. FY 2026 Budget Discussion – New information regarding insurance premiums, unpaid ambulance bills, highway equipment pricing and social services appropriations was added. The Windsor County tax amount and a few other items are still to be determined. Public comment on the budget will be requested on or before noon on January 15. The Selectboard expects to finalize the budget at that meeting or the following week.
  - h. Review Annual Report Deliverables – The Selectboard reviewed minor edits to the Highway Equipment List and Town Meeting Warning. A draft of the Budget Narrative will be prepared for review. All deliverables will be approved at the January 15 meeting or the following week.
  - i. Mandatory Ethics Code – Discussion postponed to a future meeting. It was noted that this is time sensitive as the state’s new ethics requirement took effect on January 1.

- j. Planning Commission Update – The Planning Commission prepared a comment letter for submission to Two Rivers regarding the draft regional plan. The Commission would like the Selectboard to co-sign the letter. John moved and Emily seconded the same. Unanimous. Ben will sign on behalf of the Selectboard.
  - k. Appointment of Public Officers – None.
  - l. Warrants – John moved and Emily seconded approval for payment of the following warrants:
 

25060	\$	14,707.93	Payroll
25061		20,069.95	A/P (incl. \$2,745.98 December debit card activity)
25062		17,372.79	Payroll
25063		51,541.05	A/P

Unanimous.
  - m. Approval of December 18, 2024 Minutes – Emily moved and John seconded approval of the December 18, 2024, meeting minutes as presented. Unanimous.
8. Meeting Wrap Up
- a. Correspondence – Barnard’s Selectboard assistant asked how Pomfret’s Selectboard is compensated; Cynthia reported it is by stipend.
  - b. Assignments – Emily to draft paving RFP, Ben to send listserv message and post to the website a deadline of noon on January 15 for public input on the FY 2026 Town Budget; Meg to locate CVPS contract in the land records; Frank to gather non-trade-in truck purchase price; Ben to invite Christine Cole to attend a meeting re: Teago Catering License.
  - c. Agenda for Next Meeting – Highway Access Permit (Cherry Hill Road), Highway Truck Bids, Zoning Administrator appointment, FY 2026 Budget Discussion, Annual Report Deliverables, Teago Catering Permit, Highway Mileage Certificate.
9. Adjournment – Meg, John and Steve simultaneously moved and Meg, John and Emily simultaneously seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 pm.