

**Town of Pomfret  
 Selectboard Special Meeting Agenda  
 Town Offices  
 5218 Pomfret Road, North Pomfret  
 January 22, 2025, 7:00 pm**

*Zoom instructions below*

Business Items	
1. Call to Order	7:00 pm
2. Agenda Review	
3. Public Comment	
4. Road Foreman Report	7:05 pm
5. Items for Discussion or Vote a. Highway Truck Bids b. FY 2026 Budget Discussion and Approval c. FY 2026 Budget Narrative Discussion and Approval d. 2025 Annual Meeting Warning Discussion and Approval e. Request-to-Cater Permit Approval Delegation f. Appointment of Public Officials g. Warrants h. Approval of January 15, 2025 Minutes	7:15 pm
6. Meeting Wrap Up a. Correspondence b. Review of Assignments c. Agenda for Next Meeting	9:00 pm
7. Adjournment	
<i><b>Time frames are approximate.</b> Members of the public wishing to attend for specific business items are encouraged to arrive before the time indicated.</i>	

**Zoom Instructions**

- Computer or Smartphone  
<https://zoom.us/j/95395079923?pwd=ZjBEed3ZuZWgvWmx2M0tpOE8zbjg2dz09>
- Mobile Phone +19292056099,,95395079923#,,#,306922#
- Landline or Mobile Phone (301) 715 8592, then Meeting ID 953 9507 9923 and Passcode 306922

**Item 5B**  
**FY 2026 Budget Discussion**

*available at*

<https://pomfretvt.us/index.php/boar/sel/budget/>

## FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET NARRATIVE

[Macroeconomic conditions during the last four years have been exceptionally difficult for everyone on a budget. Prices have risen at their fastest pace in forty years. They increased even faster in areas that predominate the budgets of small, rural towns like Pomfret. The cost of paving has nearly doubled since 2020. Highway equipment prices are substantially higher than forecast just two years ago. Liability and health insurance premiums increased nearly 20% in the last year alone.]

After holding the line on municipal spending for the last several years, the Selectboard has concluded that a significant increase this year is not only advisable, but unavoidable. As detailed below, the proposed FY 2026 budget increases spending by [8.8]%. This is driven by many factors, but chief among them are increased saving for future paving projects and highway equipment purchases, and increased spending on non-discretionary items like insurance and emergency services. These categories alone account for [the entire amount]<sup>1</sup> of the proposed spending increase.

Nonetheless, the Selectboard believes the proposed budget is responsible and will best serve the town and taxpayers now and in the future. Prepared during [eight] public meetings with input from town officials, employees, volunteers and residents, this budget embodies a large amount of feedback received by the Selectboard. We believe it accurately reflects residents' expectations for how the town should operate today while prudently planning for the Pomfret of tomorrow.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The combined Fiscal Year 2026 Town and Highway budget of \$[2,043,151] (including voted appropriations) is [8.8]% higher than Fiscal Year 2025's total budget of \$1,877,779. The Fiscal Year 2026 budget represents an increase compared to Fiscal Year 2025 (for the reasons explained below), and is [16.2]% above the average combined budget for the last five years (Fiscal Years 2022 through 2026). If the voters approve all voted appropriations and re-appropriate a portion of the prior year's unassigned fund General Fund balance to offset current year taxes to be raised, the amount to be raised in taxes for Fiscal Year 2026 will be [14.2]% higher than in Fiscal Year 2025 (\$[1,354,609] versus \$1,186,262).

The General Fund finished Fiscal Year 2024 with an unassigned fund balance (sometimes referred to as a "surplus") of \$149,307 and the Highway Fund finished Fiscal Year 2024 with an unassigned fund balance of minus \$4,067. The unassigned fund balance in the General Fund was budgeted to end Fiscal Year 2024 at \$79,144. The significantly larger than budgeted balance arose from \$62,948 in greater than budgeted revenues and \$7,216 in lower than budgeted expenditures. The unassigned fund balance in the Highway Fund (a negative amount) arose from \$29,084 in greater than budgeted revenues (excluding a \$3,305 transfer from the Highway Rainy Day Reserve Fund), which were offset by \$33,151 in greater than budgeted expenditures.

The primary drivers of the greater than budgeted General Fund revenue were collections of delinquent taxes, interest income and state grant payments. Collection of delinquent taxes is not anticipated to be significant revenue sources going forward as recent collection efforts have substantially reduced the amount of delinquent taxes now outstanding. There were no significant drivers of the marginally lower

<sup>1</sup> **NTD:** Increased funding of the paving and highway equipment reserves (\$113,000), plus increased spending on insurance (\$35,687) and unpaid ambulance fees (\$16,696) equals \$165,383 versus the proposed increase in municipal spending of \$165,373.

<sup>2</sup> **Note to Selectboard:** To update these three paragraphs to reflect our subjective budget analysis.

than budgeted General Fund expenses. The primary drivers of the greater than budgeted Highway Fund revenue were state grant and aid payments. The primary drivers of the greater than budgeted Highway Fund expenses were payroll, fuel costs and town highway repairs.

Including all voted appropriations, the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget is [6.0]% higher than the Fiscal Year 2025 budget (\$[623,875] versus \$588,428) and [14.1]% above the average General Fund budget for the last five years. The primary drivers of this year-over-year increase are generally increasing costs in the current high inflation macroeconomic climate, and specifically building repairs, law enforcement and professional fees.

To offset these increased costs, the Selectboard proposes to apply \$[89,584] of the Fiscal Year 2024 unassigned General Fund balance as revenue in Fiscal Year 2026. [This is only a portion of the \$149,307 General Fund balance available to reduce current taxes to be raised. Due to the unprecedented size of the current fund balance and the likelihood that future fund balances will be significantly lower, the Selectboard believes it is prudent to retain some of the available fund balance in order to reduce the likelihood that significant municipal tax increases (and/or expenditure reductions) will be necessary to replace this non-recurring revenue source in future years.]<sup>3</sup>

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Highway Fund budget is [10.1]% higher than the Fiscal Year 2025 budget (\$[1,419,276] versus \$1,289,351) and [17.1]% above the average Highway Fund budget for the last five years. The primary drivers of this year-over-year increase are generally increasing costs in the current high inflation macroeconomic climate, and specifically paving, insurance premiums, fuel costs and equipment expenses.

\* \* \* \* \*

[The Selectboard recognizes that the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget entails a larger than usual increase in spending. This is due in part to macroeconomic conditions beyond our control that are driving up costs generally, not just in Pomfret. It also results from our desire to anticipate future needs through realistic capital planning and commensurate reserve funding, and our limited ability to reduce or avoid non-discretionary spending in areas like insurance and emergency services.]<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin Brickner, Chair  
John Peters, Jr., Vice-Chair  
Steve Chamberlin  
Meg Emmons  
Emily Grube

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<sup>3</sup> **Note to Selectboard:** To decide whether to assign all (or a portion of) the General Fund balance to reduce current taxes to be raised. For the last two years, the Selectboard assigned 60% of the available General Fund balance. In prior years, the Selectboard assigned 100% of the amount available.

<sup>4</sup> **Note to Selectboard:** To update this paragraph to reflect our subjective budget analysis.

**WARNING  
TOWN OF POMFRET  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2025**

The legal voters of the Town of Pomfret, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Pomfret Town Offices, 5218 Pomfret Road, on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, between 8:00 AM and 7:00 PM, to vote by Australian ballot upon the articles of business listed herein.

An informational hearing to discuss the articles to be voted upon will occur at the Pomfret Town Hall, 5233 Pomfret Road, and via Zoom on Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 9:00 AM. Instructions for joining the informational hearing appear at the end of this Warning.

The legal voters of the Town of Pomfret, Vermont are further notified that voter qualification, registration and absentee voting relative to said voting by Australian ballot shall be as provided in Chapters 43, 51 and 55 of Title 17, Vermont Statutes Annotated. For more information, please visit <https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/voters/early-absentee-voting/> or call the Pomfret Town Offices at (802) 457-3861 during normal business hours (Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM).

1. To elect the following Town officers:
  - Town Moderator, 1-year term;
  - Town Clerk, 1-year term;
  - Selectboard Member, 3-year term;
  - Selectboard Member, 2-year term;
  - Treasurer, 1-year term;
  - Cemetery Commissioner, 3-year term;
  - Cemetery Commissioner, 2 years to finish a 3-year term;
  - Lister, 3-year term;
  - Lister, 2 years to finish a 3-year term;
  - Auditor, 3-year term;
  - Auditor, 2 years to finish a 3-year term;
  - Library Trustee, 3-year term;
  - Library Trustee, 3-year term; and
  - Trustee of Public Funds, 3-year term.
2. Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect current taxes, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. 4791?
3. Shall the voters approve the combined budget for Fiscal Year 2026 of \$[1,967,322] for general purposes (\$[548,046]) and for highway purposes (\$[1,419,276]), of which \$[1,368,365] will be raised by current year taxes and \$[598,957] by other sources?

Note: The amounts in this Article 3 exclude the appropriations proposed in Articles 4 through [15] below.
4. Shall the voters appropriate \$42,500 to the Abbott Memorial Library?
5. Shall the voters appropriate \$16,500 to the Pomfret Cemetery Commission?

6. Shall the voters appropriate \$3,950 to the Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH in support of care provided in patients' homes?
7. Shall the voters appropriate \$4,800 to the Woodstock Area Council on Aging (d.b.a. The Thompson Senior Center) to be used for operational expenses to provide meals on wheels, transportation, wellness and social activities, medical equipment, and other Aging at Home support services to benefit Town residents?
8. Shall the voters appropriate \$979 to Health Care and Rehabilitation Services for support of services provided to residents of Windsor County?
9. Shall the voters appropriate \$2,500 to the Empower Up - Windsor Central Mentoring Program (formerly known as the Ottauquechee Community Partnership) to support their Mentor and Buddy Program?
10. Shall the voters appropriate \$750 to the Spectrum Teen Center for support of activities at the center?
11. Shall the voters appropriate \$900 to Pentangle Arts for providing artistic endeavors in the community?
12. Shall the voters appropriate \$2,500 to the Ottauquechee Health Foundation (OHF) for funding and support for individuals with limited financial means to help meet critical health and wellness needs such as medical and dental care, eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures, prescription co-payments and short-term caregiver services?
13. Shall the voters appropriate \$400 to the Women's Information Service (WISE) of the Upper Valley for support of activities at the service?
14. Shall the voters appropriate \$50 to Green Up Vermont for Green Up Day supplies and services?
15. Shall the voters re-appropriate \$[89,584] of the unassigned General Fund balance to reduce Fiscal Year 2026 taxes to be raised?

Note: Approval of this article would leave \$[59,723] in the General Fund balance, which amount would remain subject to re-appropriation by the voters at a later date.

16. Shall the voters require that taxes be paid in U.S. funds in two installments, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. 4773, and that the first installment of such taxes be due and accepted at the Treasurer's office on or before 2:30 PM on August 15, 2025, and that the balance be due at the same location on or before 2:30 PM on February 6, 2026, and that overdue taxes bear interest at a rate of 1.0% per month or fraction thereof from the due date of each installment pursuant to 32 V.S.A. 4873, and that all delinquent taxes be subject to an 8.0% penalty pursuant to 32 V.S.A. 1674?

*[Remainder of page intentionally blank. Signature page follows.]*

Dated this [22nd] day of January, 2025,  
by the Selectboard of the Town of Pomfret:

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Benjamin Brickner, Chair

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John Peters Jr., Vice-Chair

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Steve Chamberlin

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Meg Emmons

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Emily Grube

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**AUSTRALIAN BALLOT**  
**INFORMATIONAL HEARING INSTRUCTIONS**

An informational hearing to discuss the articles to be voted upon will occur at the Pomfret Town Hall, 5233 Pomfret Road, and via Zoom on Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 9:00 AM. You may join this informational hearing by telephone, computer or smartphone as follows:

***Computer or Smartphone***

<https://zoom.us/j/95395079923?pwd=ZjBEEd3ZuZWgvWmx2M0tpOE8zbjg2dz09>

***Landline or Mobile Phone***

Dial (301) 715-8592. When prompted, enter Meeting ID 953 9507 9923 and Passcode 306922.

Town of Pomfret Selectboard  
DRAFT Meeting Minutes  
January 15, 2025

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

Public: Cynthia Hewitt, Frank Rogers, Bill Emmons, Bob Crean, Neil Lamson, John Moore

1. Ben called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.
2. Executive Session
  - a. Ben moved and Emily seconded that the Selectboard enter executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(A) and (F) to discuss contracts and 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 6:02 pm.
  - b. The Selectboard exited executive session at 7:05 pm, with no decisions having been made therein.
3. Agenda Review – Ben moved and Emily seconded deleting Item 6G (Appointment of Public Officers). Unanimous.
4. Public Comment – None.
5. Road Foreman Report – Frank reports things continue going well for the new crew members. The F550 will be back in service tomorrow.
6. Items for Discussion or Vote
  - a. Highway Truck Bids – The Selectboard reviewed three bids for a 10-wheel tandem truck to replace an aging 10-wheeler. Frank will update pricing with 5- and 7-year warranty costs included, for the Selectboard to make an apples-to-apples comparison and decision at the January 22 meeting. Frank will also research the cost of a new 6-wheeler versus 10-wheeler for purposes of finalizing the FY 2026 budget, including the amount to be set aside in the Highway Vehicle Reserve next year.
  - b. Highway Access Permit (Cherry Hill Road) – Emily moved and John seconded approval of the highway access application with a condition that the existing driveway be abandoned prior to beginning use of the new driveway, as required by the Highway Ordinance. No culvert is necessary. Unanimous.
  - c. Town Highway Mileage Certificate – John moved and Emily seconded approval of the certificate showing a 0.01-mile increase in Class 4 highway mileage as a result of the minor relocation of Hewitt Hill Road (T.H. 24) last year. Unanimous.
  - d. FY 2026 Budget Discussion – The Windsor County Sheriff appropriation was reduced to the FY 2025 amount; Ben will speak with the Sheriff about receiving the correct number of patrol hours in town. An additional amount was added for signs; Frank will research prices for portable flashing speed limit signs. A final decision on the amount to be set aside in the Highway Vehicle Reserve will be made at the January 22 meeting; Frank will research the cost of a new 6-wheeler versus 10-wheeler for this purpose. The Teago Village Reserve amount was zeroed in order to reduce the increase in taxes to be raised; Ben will confirm with Ellen the current balance in this fund.



- e. Review Annual Report Deliverables – Ben moved and Emily seconded approving the Selectboard Report, Town Asset List, and Officer List in their current form. Unanimous. Ben will forward the same to the Auditors. The Annual Meeting Warning, Budget Narrative and Budget Worksheets will be approved at the January 22 meeting.
  - f. Employment of Public Employees – Discussion continued on how best to accommodate the health benefit of a new Road Crew member. Frank will discuss with the new employee and Ben will coordinate with Ellen to implement the employee’s preference. Ben moved and John seconded that if the new employee opts to remain on Medicare (rather than enroll in the town’s Blue Cross Blue Shield plan), the employee’s hourly rate be increased by \$2.00 for the rest of 2025 to offset the new employee’s out-of-pocket cost of the same. Unanimous.
  - g. DLL License Renewal (Teago Store Commercial Caterer) – John moved and Steve seconded approval as presented. Unanimous.
  - h. Warrants – John moved and Emily seconded approval for payment of the following warrants:
 

25065	\$	181.38	Payroll (Pay Rate Correction)
25066		976.88	A/P

 Unanimous.
  - i. Approval of January 15, 2025 Minutes – John moved and Emily seconded approval of the January 15, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Unanimous.
7. Meeting Wrap Up
- a. Correspondence – None.
  - b. Assignments – Ben to speak with Ellen re: new highway employee pay rate and confirm Teago Village Reserve balance; Ryan Palmer re: Sheriff patrol hours; Cherry Hill Road landowner re: driveway permit; Ben and Cynthia to determine HIPAA training and certification steps; Frank to discuss insurance coverage with new employee, obtain truck pricing information, research mobile speed sign prices; Steve to research uniform prices.
  - c. Agenda for Next Meeting – New highway truck bids, appointment of public officers, FY 2026 budget and 2024 annual report deliverables approval.
8. Adjournment – John moved and Emily seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 pm.