

TOWN OF MANCHESTER, VERMONT
2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, March 1, 2025 1:00pm
Manchester Elementary Middle School
DRAFT

Moderator W. Michael Nawrath called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm. He welcomed voters and non-voters to the 2025 Annual Town Meeting in Manchester, introduced Boy Scout Troop # 332 members Liam Egbert and Sam Gilliam, and asked for all to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance led by members of Boy Scout Troop # 332. Nawrath then gave a brief speech on the historical significance of the floor portion of Town Meeting. Nawrath directed voters to the warning, found on page 8 of the town report and noted the meeting would be governed by Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised. He asked for unanimous consent to allow one non-voter and any department head to speak to each article, without requiring a vote of the body. With no opposition, one non-voter, the town manager and any non-resident town agency head would be permitted to speak to each article. Moderator Nawrath then read the warning:

The legal voters of the Town of Manchester are hereby warned and notified that the Town will hold an annual meeting that will commence at the Manchester Elementary-Middle School gymnasium (80 Memorial Ave.), Manchester Center, Vermont 05255) on Saturday March 1, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. to transact any business not involving Australian ballot voting. The meeting will then adjourn until Tuesday, March 4, 2025, on which date the polls will open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m. at the Manchester Town Offices (40 Jeff Williams Way) to vote by Australian ballot.

Town of Manchester Floor Meeting:

Article 1. To present awards, make acknowledgements, and to hear reports from our legislative delegation.

Ivan Beattie welcomed everyone and introduced Selectboard members Vice- Chair Greg Cutler, Heidi Chamberlain, Jonathan West and Selectboard Clerk Jan Nolan. He thanked Jan Nolan for her service to the Town, acknowledging the meeting would be her final action as a board member prior to retiring. He introduced Manchester Town Manager Scott Murphy and acknowledged various department heads including Town Clerk Anita Sheldon, Water Board member Doug Kilburn, Human Resources and Operations Manager Katie Dixon, chair of the Planning Commission, E. Wilbur Rice, Senator Seth Bongartz, Senator Robert "Rob" Plunkett, Office Ryan Matteson from the Manchester Police Department, State Representatives Kathleen James and Robert "Rob" Hunter, Town Treasurer Brian Vogel and a number of other people whom have served the municipal over the years. He thanked all for their service. Jonathan West gave a brief speech regarding town report dedications from the past several years. West acknowledged the 2021 Town Report was dedicated to Tim Waker, with 25+ years of service on various boards and committees reflecting his continued unwavering commitment to fairness and accessibility. Greg Cutler asked Tim Waker to come forward to be recognized, along with John O'Keefe and Mike Casey. Greg Cutler acknowledged the 2022 Town Report was dedicated to John O'Keefe, former Town Manager of 16 years for skillfully guiding many projects to fruition in Manchester

during his tenure as Town Manager. Jonathan West acknowledged the 2023 town report was dedicated to Mike Casey, who devoted 35 years to the Northshire Rescue Squad, building a department known for professionalism and exceptional care. Greg Cutler presented the 2024 Town Report to Wayne E. Bell for his 40 years as a Justice of the peace, 21 years on the Selectboard and a dedicated volunteer in the community. Bell was presented a framed copy of the Town Report. State Representative Kathleen James, gave a brief overview of her work in the legislature, specifically noting education reform, housing shortage and the rising costs of healthcare. James was appointed a member of the House Energy and Digital Infrastructure Committee, spoke of the importance of the newly-formed committee and provided an update that the Clean Heat Standard would not be moving forward in the new biennium. She addressed federal cuts may impact public school funding in Vermont as 36% of Vermont's annual budget came from the federal government. If programs were to be frozen or cut, voters may feel an impact. The legislature was working on contingency plans if Vermont began feeling pressure from the federal government. State Representative Robert "Rob" Hunter spoke regarding the education committee he was appointed to, and spoke about the possible decrease of school districts from 119 districts to 5 districts in the state currently being discussed in the legislature and the possibility of creating school choice schools. Senator Seth Bongartz acknowledged a new proposal for 9 school districts within the state, rather than the 5-school district plan presented by Governor Scott. Senator Rob Plunkett was assigned to the agricultural committee, and was enthusiastic to speak to farmers in the area to better understand their needs. He briefly spoke of the Farm Security Fund and the Senate Committee on Institutions.

Article 2. Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$7,640,018 to defray the operating and capital expenses of the Town for the ensuing year, of which \$4,753,027 shall be raised by property taxes and \$2,886,991 by non-property tax revenues (including \$1,425,000 in local option tax revenues); provided, that in the event that local option revenues are less than \$1,425,000, funds from the Property Tax Relief Reserve Fund may be used to offset the shortfall in local option revenues and that any amount in excess of \$1,425,000 shall be transferred into the Property Tax Relief Reserve Fund?

Moved by Ivan Beattie, seconded by Orland Campbell. Town Manager Scott Murphy referred voters to page 33, for a mislabeled account under the local option taxes section. The account was labeled "Transfer In- Property Tax Relief Fund, and the account should have been labeled "Transfer In- Unassigned Funds". Beattie further noted the budget summary on page 19 appears correct. Beattie referred to the budget beginning on page 18 of the town report, including informative charts on page 19. The budget was organized by departments to give voters a better idea of what it costs to operate various departments, providing transparency to the voters. Payroll, operating costs and capital expenses were the most notable expenses within the budget. Beattie gave a breakdown of department employees of the 33 full-time employees and additional part-time and seasonal employees. He noted the water and sewer budgets were not supported by tax dollars, only by users of the systems. He noted the \$450,000 energy grant received by the Manchester Energy Committee, assisting with energy improvements at Town Hall and the Public Safety Facility. The proposed fiscal year '26 budget is \$7,640,018, an increase of \$743,591 or 10.8% from fiscal year '25. The numbers Beattie referenced did not include voted appropriations. He mentioned an 18.5 percent increase in non-property tax revenues. The Selectboard chose to use \$175,000 from the unassigned funds, an accumulated amount of the general fund balance over the years, and apply it to the fiscal year '26 budget. Beattie referenced page 19, comparing revenue and expenses between fiscal year '25 and fiscal year '26, specifically the amount

of property taxes, the estimated grand list and the estimated tax rate. The '25 tax rate appearing in the town report was misstated on the chart. The correct number should be 0.2657. If approved, the budget would reflect an overall increase of just over 5.2%. the 10.8% increase in spending was reduced to 5.2% by leveraging it with non-property tax revenues. 16 % of the total tax bill supports the municipal budget. The remaining 84% of the tax bill supports other budgets including education and voted appropriations. Details of the budget may be found on page 22 through page 34 for reference. Beattie expressed his desire for voters to ask questions and stated he welcomed questions regarding the budget. The question was called and article 2 was approved.

Article 3. Shall the Town vote to charge the maximum interest and penalty allowed by law on overdue unpaid real property taxes (and provide no discount for early payment), with payments delivered in person at Town Hall, electronically, or by U.S. Mail (must be postmarked by the due date), due in two installments, as follows:

1st Installment: Friday, September 5, 2025 at 4:30PM: 45% of town taxes and 6-% of school taxes

2nd Installment: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 4:30PM: 55% of town taxes and 40% of school taxes?

Moved by Wilbur Rice, seconded by Brian Vogel. Leslie "Red" Cole asked what the maximum interest and penalty was as outlined in state law. Brian Vogel stated the maximum was 8%. Leslie "Red" Cole asked for that information to be included in the article or town report in the future. The question was called article 3 was approved.

Article 4. Shall the Town vote to establish a Reserve Fund to be called the "Highway Equipment Reserve Fund" for the purpose of purchasing highway vehicles and large Capital Equipment expenses for the Department of Public Works (DPW) in accordance with 24 V.S.A. 2804?

Moved by Heidi Chamberlain, seconded by Doug Kilburn. Heidi Chamberlain shared this article would be consistent with other departments with reserve funds for future projects. Orland Campbell asked if the board looked into borrowing instead of creating reserve funds. Chamberlain acknowledged the board consistently looks into the various options and due to the current market, it would be beneficial to establish the reserve account at this time. Edward Morrow stated he had a difficult time locating where the funds would come from in the budget presented. He assumed the budget would incorporate those funds so they could be put into reserves, but he was unable to locate the funds in the town report. Chamberlain acknowledged the money would come from unassigned funds from expenditures in previous budgets, but not used. The Selectboard was trying to replenish some reserves as reserves have been depleted over the last several years while also smoothing out some capital expenditures so the expense is not captured in one budget. The question was called and article 4 was approved.

Article 5. Shall the Town deposit \$50,000 from the General Fund surplus (Unassigned Funds) to fund the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund?

Moved by Heidi Chamberlain, seconded by Doug Kilburn. Chamberlain stated the money would fund the account voters approved under article 4. William "Bill" Drusic asked if there were a Department of Public Works capital plan. Ivan Beattie stated the larger dump trucks were on a 20-year cycle and the 1-ton trucks were on a ten-year cycle. Beattie acknowledged the Selectboard would review whether it

would be beneficial to keep reserve accounts or borrow funds, if necessary. The question was called and article 5 was approved.

John O'Keefe moved to suspend the rules for the purpose of voting only, to vote articles 6 through 15 as one motion. With unanimous consent of the body, the rules were suspended allowing articles 6 through 15 to be voted as one.

Articles 6 through 16 are under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. §2691 and 2692. Shall the Town vote to appropriate general funds to social service agencies?

Article 6. To appropriate \$2,500 to the Tutorial Center?

Sean-Marie Oller gave a brief overview of the Tutorial Center, thanked voters for their previous support and asked for continued support.

Article 7. To appropriate \$2,400 to Bennington County Habitat for Humanity?

Katie McNabb, Bennington County Habitat for Humanity board member, gave a brief overview of the organization, noting the next house dedication would take place in Bennington, Vermont on March 15th and the 14th home to be constructed in Manchester would begin in the summer of 2025. McNabb asked for continued support.

Article 8. To appropriate \$2,000 to Center for Restorative Justice?

No discussion.

Article 9. To appropriate \$1,850 to Project Against Violent Encounters?

No discussion.

Article 10. To appropriate \$1,811 to BROCC Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?

No discussion.

Article 11. To appropriate \$1,500 to Green Mountain Retired Senior Volunteer Program?

No discussion.

Article 12. To appropriate \$1,500 to Neighbor to Neighbor?

No discussion.

Article 13. To appropriate \$1,000 to The Collaborative?

Victoria Silsby, Prevention Specialist at the Collaborative, thanked the residents of Manchester for support in previous years. She gave a brief overview of the services the Collaborative offers to Manchester residents and asked for continued support.

Article 14. To appropriate \$500 to Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired?

No discussion.

Article 15. To appropriate \$420 to Vermont Center for Independent Living?

Brian Vogel stated he appreciated the agencies submitting information for the town report, but asked for a representative from each entity to show respect by attending the town floor meeting if requesting voted appropriations.

At 2:13pm, Moderator Nawrath asked John O'Keefe to confirm he wanted to proceed with his motion to vote articles 6-15 as one article. John O'Keefe confirmed, seconded by Wayne Bell. The question was called and articles 6-15 were approved.

Article 16. To transact any other business appropriate to come before Town Meeting?

No discussion.

Voting by Australian ballot on March 5, 2025 (SIC: March 4):

Article 17. Shall the Town appropriate \$4,000 for the support of the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging?

Alison Hill gave a brief overview the multitude of services offered to Manchester residents from the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, thanked voters for their past support and asked for support of the article.

Article 18. Shall the Town appropriate \$20,000 for the support of VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region?

Jessica Fredette, Chief Human Resource and Development Officer at VNA & Hospice gave a brief overview of the services offered to Manchester residents by the VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region and thanked voters for their support.

Article 19. Shall the Town appropriate \$75,000 for the support of the Northshire Day School?

Dan Sawtelle, Board member of the Northshire Day School, thanked the Selectboard for their support, thanked John O'Keefe for speeding up the meeting and provided a brief overview of the Northshire Day School, indicating about 75% of the families served were Manchester residents. He noted the \$5,000 decrease in the voted appropriation request again this year and asked for continued support.

Article 20. Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$335,000 for the support of the Manchester Community Library?

Ed Surjan gave a brief overview of the Manchester Community Library, noted the fiscal balance at the library, expressed that libraries are much more than repositories of books and asked for support of the article. Carl Buchholt, Manchester Energy Committee chair urged for support of the article as the Energy Committee uses the library free of charge for community events.

Article 21. To elect Town Officers for the ensuing year.

No discussion.

Please see Manchester, Vermont official election results attached

With no further business to come before the meeting, Janet "Jan" Nolan moved to adjourn the meeting to March 4, 2025, seconded by Victoria Silsby. The meeting stood adjourned at 2:32pm.

Be it known of the 3, 891 voters on the Manchester voter checklist as of March 1, 2025, 157 voters attended the Annual Town Floor Meeting. Of the 3,893 voters on the Manchester voter checklist as of March 4, 2025, 853 voters cast their ballot (234 voters voted by absentee and 619 voters came to the polls on March 4, 2025).

Respectfully submitted,
Anita L. Sheldon, MMC/CVC
Manchester Town Clerk

Cynthia Kilburn
Chair of the Board of Civil Authority

W. Michael "Mike" Nawrath
Town Moderator

MANCHESTER, VERMONT OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS – ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – MARCH 4, 2025

Of the 3,893 Manchester voters, 853 voters cast their ballot in the Annual Town Meeting Election on March 4, 2025.

234 voters voted by early/absentee ballot. 619 voters came to the polls on March 4, 2025.

Article 17: \$4,000 to support the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging

YES	757
NO	75
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	21
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article 18: \$20,000 to support VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region

YES	764
NO	70
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	19
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article 19: \$75,000 to support the Northshire Day School

YES	585
NO	240
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	28
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article 20: \$335,000 to support the Manchester Community Library

YES	533
NO	304
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	16
TOTAL VOTES	853

MANCHESTER, VERMONT OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS – ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – MARCH 4, 2025

Of the 3,893 Manchester voters, 853 voters cast their ballot in the Annual Town Meeting Election on March 4, 2025.

234 voters voted by early/absentee ballot. 619 voters came to the polls on March 4, 2025.

Moderator – 1 yr. term

* 17 V.S.A. §2683 permits a recount if requested in writing prior to 4:30pm on 3/14/25*

O'Keefe confirmed that he would not be requesting a recount on 3/4/25 at 9:52pm via email

W. Michael "Mike" Nawrath (DECLARED ELECTED)	399
John O'Keefe	397
Brian Vogel	1
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	56
TOTAL VOTES	853

Selectboard – 2 yr. term

Karen M. Geriak	137
Lucas "Luke" Krueger	210
Laurie A. Kunz (DECLARED ELECTED)	432
Overvotes	1
Undervotes	73
TOTAL VOTES	853

Selectboard – 3 yr. term

* 17 V.S.A. §2683 permits a recount if requested in writing prior to 4:30pm on 3/14/25*

Greg Cutler (DECLARED ELECTED)	394
W. Michael "Mike" Nawrath	391
Thomas West	2
Marek Kovac	1
Linda Drunslc	1
Luke Kornbluh	1
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	63
TOTAL VOTES	853

Trustee of Public Funds – 3 yr. term

Andrew Shaw (DECLARED ELECTED)	730
Thomas West	1
Johanna Dunigan	1
William Hadden	1
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	120
TOTAL VOTES	853

MANCHESTER, VERMONT OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS - SVRTSD - TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025

Of the 3,893 Manchester voters, 853 voters cast their ballot in the SVRTSD Election on March 4, 2025.

Article A: SVRTSD Director

Leon Johnson	459
Francis E. Kinney	452
Kenneth A. Swlerad	417
Thomas West	483
Write-Ins	
Grub Bourn	1
Bruce King	1
Adam Cole	1
Jeff Wilson	1
Wayne Bell	1
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	1596
TOTAL VOTES	3412

Article B: SVRTSD Director

Byrom Jomaa	109
Tim Wheeler	345
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	399
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article C: SVRTSD Moderator

Bruce Lee-Clark	528
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	325
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article D: SVRTSD Treasurer

Ellen Strohmalder	529
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	324
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article E: SVRTSD Clerk

Cassandra Barbeau	528
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	325
TOTAL VOTES	853

MANCHESTER, VERMONT OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS - SVRTSD - TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025

Of the 3,893 Manchester voters, 853 voters cast their ballot in the SVRTSD Election on March 4, 2025.
Article F: SVRTSD Budget \$5,154,303

YES	642
NO	113
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	98
TOTAL VOTES	853

Article G: SVRTSD Reserve Funds

YES	617
NO	130
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	106
TOTAL VOTES	853

MANCHESTER, VERMONT OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS – TACONIC & GREEN RSD – March 4, 2025

Of the 3,893 Manchester voters, 851 voters cast their ballot in the Taconic & Green RSD Election on
March 4, 2025

Article 8: Borrow Money

YES	660
NO	142
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	49
TOTAL VOTES	851

Article 9: Expend \$39,761,652

YES	684
NO	129
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	38
TOTAL VOTES	851

Article 10: High School Tuition

YES	670
NO	151
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	30
TOTAL VOTES	851

Article 11: \$350,000 Buildings and Grounds Reserve Fund

YES	642
NO	159
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	50
TOTAL VOTES	851

Article 12: \$175,000 Bus Reserve Fund

YES	650
NO	162
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	39
TOTAL VOTES	851

MANCHESTER, VERMONT OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS – TACONIC & GREEN RSD – March 4, 2025

Of the 3,893 Manchester voters, 851 voters cast their ballot in the Taconic & Green RSD Election on
March 4, 2025

Article 13: \$75,000 Technology Equipment Reserve Fund

YES	666
NO	144
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	41
TOTAL VOTES	851

School Directors (4)

David Chandler	413
Kelsey Moskowitz	403
Lindsay Ralph	354
Alexander Wilde	268
Jeff Wilson	532
John Spencer	1
Erika Veth	1
Johanna Dunigan	1
Caitlin Campbell	1
Randi Lowe	1
John Sobel	1
Liz Moore	1
James Sawtelle	1
Tim McGlinn	1
Thomas West	1
Overvotes	3
Undervotes	1421
TOTAL VOTES	3404

Peru School Director

Jessica Agneessens	523
Overvotes	0
Undervotes	328
TOTAL VOTES	851