

ANNUAL MEETING
WESTMINSTER FIRE DISTRICT #3
TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
WESTMINSTER SCHOOL DISTRICT
2025

The legal voters of the Town Fire District #3, the Town of Westminister, and Westminister Town School District met at the Bellows Falls Union High School Auditorium in Westminister, Vermont on Saturday, March 1, 2025 at ten o'clock in the forenoon to take action on Articles 1 to Article 27.

Representatives Michelle Bos-Lun, Leslie Goldman, and Senator Wendy Harrison offered comments. Representative Michael Mrowicki and Senator Nader Hashim were absent. Wendy Harrison read comments by Nader Hashim.

Moderator David Major welcomed voters and began the day with an invocation, and declaration of inclusion passed at the 2024 town meeting.

Moderator Major opened the meeting and noted Robert's Rules of Order, subject to modification when Vermont Law takes precedence, will be used as a guideline for the meeting.

Article 1: Elected all Town Officers required by law and the vote of the Town March 4, 2025.
Number of names on the checklist: 2,579
Number voting: 474
Results of Australian Ballot voting:
Town Moderator – David Major
School Moderator – David Major
Fire District Moderator – David Major
Selectmen, 3-year term – Craig Allen
Selectmen, 2-year term – Charles (Chucky) Lawrence
Lister – Rachael Cohen by 157 write-in votes
Commissioner, Campbell Fund (3) – Karen Walter
Trustee of Campbell Fund (1) – Pete Harrison
Trustee of Public Funds (1) – Pete Harrison
UHSD#27 Director, 3-year term – Emily Bragonier
Town School Director, 2-year term – Margie Kearns Ferry
Town School Director, 3-year term – Christine 'Tine' Biolsi
Fire District #3 Prudential Committee – Daniel Green
Article 1: BFUHS School District – Passed (Yes 280, No 163)
Article 2: River Valley Technical Center – Passed (Yes 337, No 100)

Article 2: To hear the reports of the Town Fire District #3 and to take action thereupon. **There was no action or comment by prudential members Katie Dearborn, Cole Streeter, Dan Green, and Chris Harlow**

Article 3: To see whether Town Fire District #3 shall authorize and instruct its Prudential Committee

and Treasurer to borrow money, if necessary, to meet current expenses, on the credit of the district, in anticipation of the collection of taxes and/or the receipt of any State or Federal Funds. **Katie Dearborn moved Article 3 as warned, seconded by Toby Young. Ms. Dearborn said the select board did not govern the Town Fire District #3. The Prudential Committee presents the budget, and large expenses are presented to the voters. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 4: To see if the voters of the Town Fire District #3 will raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Sixty-Four Thousand, Eight Hundred Dollars (\$364,800.00) to pay the indebtedness and other general expenses of the District for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026. **Dan Green moved Article 4 as warned, seconded by Jacob Streeter. Katie Dearborn said the fire district received funds from the State of Vermont, Hold Harmless, and PILOT program, these funds are put directly in the capital reserve fund. Willis (Chip) Stearns, (New England Municipal Resource Center) there was no objection to Mr. Stearns, a non-resident speaking, said the 2024 audit by Sullivan and Powers Company has not been completed. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 5: To see if the voters of the Town Fire District #3 will authorize the Prudential Committee to expend up to One Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$125,000.00) from the Capital Reserve Fund for the purchase of a new Utility Vehicle. **Chris Harlow moved Article 5 as warned, seconded by David Mulholland. Katie Dearborn said the balance in the capital reserve fund was \$281,000.00. Cole Streeter said a 1986 truck in Westminster West is used for forestry and rescue. The 2004 utility vehicle at the main station will be moved to Westminster West and replaced by the new vehicle. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 6: To transact any other business proper to be brought before the Town Fire District #3 meeting. **David Mulholland expressed gratitude to the fire department. Moderator Major thanked the Prudential Committee and Chief Cole Streeter.**

Article 7: To hear the reports of the Town Officers and take action thereupon. **Dan Crocker said Select board meetings are warned 48 hours prior to the meeting. An agenda can be requested through the Town website.**

Article 8: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster authorize and instruct its Selectboard to borrow money, if necessary, on the credit of the town for its current expenses in anticipation of the collection of taxes and/or the receipt of any state or Federal funds? **Katrina Hamilton moved Article 8 as warned, seconded by Oliver Brody. Motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 9: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster authorize total General Fund expenditures for Operating expenses of One Million Three Hundred Ninety-Eight Thousand Eighteen Dollars (\$1,398,018.00) of which One Million Eighty-Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Thirteen Dollars (\$1,087,913.00) shall be raised by taxes, and Three Hundred Ten Thousand One Hundred Five (\$310,105.00) by other estimated revenue for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026? **Dan Crocker moved Article 9 as warned, seconded by Stephen**

Major. Lou Bordeaux (there was no objection to Mr. Bordeaux, a non-resident speaking) said the town manager's salary, per contract was \$113,300.00, the zoning administrator, assistant treasurer, and lister clerk \$62,738.00, and administrative assistant, assistant zoning administrator \$62,738.00. Katrina Hamilton noted Dummerston and Westminster were not comparable as Dummerston was select board and town clerk driven; they did not have a town manager. Stephen Major said the town would collect delinquent taxes and it was by accounting rules the town was not able to budget for delinquent taxes. Chip Stearns said carried forward from last year was \$209,985.00. Also, the balance of the bridge fund was \$323,364.92. Lou Bordeaux said an office traffic study was done from spring to fall last year. The numbers showed the customer service traffic, Monday-Thursday 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. (current hours) was double the volume on Fridays. Christine 'Tine' Biolsi called the question, seconded by Kestrel Craig. Motion to call the question passed by two-thirds standing vote. The motion passed by standing vote, Yes 117, No 40.

Article 10: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster authorize total Highway Fund expenditures for operating expenses of One Million Seven Hundred Seventy-Four Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,774,500.00) of which One Million Six Hundred Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,607,500.00) shall be raised by taxes and One Hundred Sixty-Seven Thousand Dollars (\$167,000.00) by other estimated revenue for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026? **Real Bazin moved Article 10 as warned, seconded by Robert Rhodes. Marion Major thanked the road crew for working almost every weekend due to the past 'real' winter. Mr. Bazin said a pick-up truck was a new purchase, and there was no trade. This pick-up will be used for errands, checking roads, and attending meetings saving wear and tear on larger trucks. Chip Stearns said the bridge fund reserve balance was \$323,364.92, the equipment fund balance was \$250,000.00, and the retreatment fund had a negative balance of \$5,847.86. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 11: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster raise and appropriate the sum of Seventeen Thousand Four Hundred Dollars (\$17,400.00) to complete the repairs to the Westminster West Cemetery Hearse Shed? **Stephen Major moved Article 11 as warned, seconded by David Mulholland. Stephen Major said the shed is owned by the town and located across from the Westminster West church. The funds will be used (with approval) for stabilizing and to repair the building. \$17,400.00 is in addition to ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) monies of \$20,000.00 previously allocated. Adrienne Major called the question, seconded by Martha Mitchell. The motion to call the question passed by voice vote. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 12: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster increase the annual Town appropriation from Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$7,500.00) to Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) to support the cost of operation and maintenance of the Westminster Institute and Butterfield Library? **Jason Perry moved Article 12 as warned, seconded by Patrick Matteau. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 13: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster vote to raise, appropriate, and expend the sum of Three Thousand Eighty-Three Dollars (\$3,083.00) to help support the food budget of Putney Food Shelf, which provides services to residents of the Town of Westminster? **Katrina Hamilton moved Article 13 as warned, seconded by Ron Bos-Lun. Gordon Hayward moved to amend the article increasing the appropriation amount from \$3,083.00 to \$5,000.00, seconded by Peter Stamm. The motion to amend the amount of appropriation passed by voice vote. The motion, as amended passed by voice vote.**

Moderator Major recessed the meeting for lunch.

Article 14: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00) to support the Bellows Falls Community Bike Project? **Real Bazin moved Article 14 as warned, seconded by Martha Mitchell. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 15: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster vote to continue their support for the Westminster Gazette in the annual amount of Eight Thousand Dollars (\$8,000.00) to partially defray costs associated with production and distribution? **Dan Crocker moved Article 15 as warned, seconded by Cassandra James. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 16: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster vote to eliminate the elected Board of Listers, in favor of a professional assessing department? **Katrina Hamilton moved Article 16 as warned, seconded by David Mulholland. Rachael Cohen, a lister since 2017 requested voters write her name on the ballot when voting March 4, 2025. Her petition for re-election was not submitted due to being out of town for a family matter. Robert Wickberg called the question, seconded by Matt Conklin. To call the question passed by voice vote. Seven people called for a paper ballot to decide Article 16. Article 16, voted by paper ballot was defeated, No 124, Yes 7.**

Article 17: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster vote to raise, appropriate, and expend the sum of Eight Thousand Dollars (\$8,000.00) annually, in addition to the sum included in the budget proposed by the Selectboard, to help support the rapidly rising costs of operation, maintenance, and programming for the Westminster West Public Library? **Jason Perry moved Article 17 as warned, seconded by Craig Hawkins. Moderator Major said per the town report, \$15,400.00 is currently budgeted for the Westminster West Public Library. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 18: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster allow the Selectboard to offer for public sale, the property known as "North Westminster Community House" to be used exclusively as residential housing? **Dan Crocker moved Article 18 as warned, seconded by Oliver Brody. Dan Crocker said a parking study, paid for by the town, verified there may be seven parking spaces at the building. John Ewald said the building was historical, used for town storage, and the only community building that could be connected to town water and sewer. John Ewald motioned to table the article to the next town meeting, seconded by Gia Neswald. The motion to table the motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 19: Shall the voters of the Town of Westminster vote to utilize Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$2,000,000.00) for the purpose of reducing taxes, from a Fiscal Year 2024 budget surplus? **Real Bazin moved Article 19 as warned, seconded by June Streeter. The motion passed by voice vote. Chip Stearns said the general fund balance carried forward from 2024 to 2025 was \$290,985.00. He presumed the town would use \$100,000.00 from the general fund balance. The highway fund balance carried forward was \$340,440.16. The remaining \$100,000.00 would come from the highway fund balance. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 20: To transact any other proper business to be brought before the Town of Westminster Annual Meeting.

John Gregg reminded voters that the Town Clerk and Treasurer's office is open on Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Susan Harlow received the Town's Citizen of the Year Award.

Stephen Major thanked Katrina Hamilton for serving on the select board.

Moderator Major called upon candidates Craig Allen, Paul Banik running for a 3-year term, Charles (Chunky) Lawrence and Dan Crocker running for a 2-year term on the selectboard to introduce themselves. Emily Bragonier, running for a 3-year term on UHSD#27 school board introduced herself.

Under other business, Marion Major motioned for the voters to consider: We, the residents of Westminster resolve to formally request that our governor, Phil Scott, publicly reaffirm his commitment to uphold the rule of law, protecting the rights of Vermonters and the Vermont Constitution amidst federal overreach, even if confronted with federal threats related to funding or other matters. Additionally, we call on him to work with his colleagues on both a state and federal level to safeguard critical services such as Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security, which are essential to the well-being of all Vermonters. The non-binding motion passed by voice vote.

Article 21: To hear the report of the Westminster Town School District officers and take action thereon. **Cheryl Charles, Chair of the Westminster School Board, referred to the school reports in the 2024 Town Report. Ms. Charles introduced board members Charles Hutchinson, Karen Blanchard, Christine 'Tine' Biolsi, Margie Ferry, and Liz Harty, principal of Westminster Center School.**

Article 22: Shall the voters of the Westminster Town School District authorize and instruct its School Directors and Treasurer to borrow money, if necessary, on the credit of the town school district for its current expenses in anticipation of the collection of taxes and receipt of money due from state aid and other sources? **Margie Ferry moved Article 22 as warned, seconded by Martha Mitchell. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 23: Shall the voters of the Westminster Town School District apply the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) from the fiscal year 2024 surplus of Two Hundred Thirty-Six Thousand One Hundred Fifteen Dollars (\$236,115.00) to create a reserve fund to offset expenditures in the fiscal year 2027? **Christine ‘Tine’ Biolsi moved Article 23 as warned, seconded by Sarah Waldo. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 24: Shall the voters of the Westminster Town School District apply the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) from the fiscal year 2024 surplus of Two Hundred Thirty-Six Thousand One Hundred Fifteen Dollars (\$236,115.00) to create a reserve fund to offset expenditures in the fiscal year 2028? **Charles Hutchinson moved Article 24 as warned, seconded by Jamie Storrow. Cheryl Charles said all reserve monies are invested in interest-bearing accounts; she believed the rate was about 3.5% (three and one half percent). The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 25: Shall the voters apply the sum of Thirty-Six thousand One Hundred Fifteen Dollars (\$36,115.00) from the Westminster Town School District 2024 surplus to a reserve fund for repairs or improvements to buildings and grounds, including, although not limited to, enhanced security and energy efficiencies, and to authorize the Board to expend such funds. **Karen Blanchard moved Article 25 as warned, seconded by Marion Major. Cheryl Charles noted a hand-out of all reserve funds to date created from surplus monies and approved by voters. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 26: Shall the voters of the Westminster Town School District authorize the school board to expend Five Million Three Hundred Eight Thousand One Hundred Twenty-Four Dollars (\$5,308,124.00) which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The Westminster Town School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per-pupil education spending of \$15,015.49 which is 12.67% (twelve point six seven percent) higher than per-pupil education spending of the current year. **Cheryl Charles moved Article 26 as warned, seconded by Martha Mitchell. Cheryl Charles introduced Edward Connors, business manager of Windham Northeast Supervisory District. Liz Harty said that per the declining school population, the staff had been reduced by two people while maintaining appropriate class sizes and quality instruction. Tine Biolsi said a different licensure would be required to teach seventh and eighth-grade students. This could increase the budget due to having to employ additional teachers. The motion passed by voice vote.**

Article 27: To transact any other proper business to be brought before the Town School District Annual Meeting. **Jamie Storrow, Westminster representative to Bellows Falls Union High School board spoke regarding the High School budget to be voted by ballot March 4, 2025.**

Sarah Waldo thanked David Major for holding up the Town Meeting process for the entire day.

There being no other business proper to be brought before the meeting, the moderator declared the meeting recessed at 4:06 p.m. to the Town School vote March 4, 2025. Voting from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Westminster Institute.