

**ANNUAL FAIRLEE TOWN MEETING
MARCH 3, 2026
MINUTES**

Fairlee Town Meeting was held in the Town Hall Auditorium on Tuesday, March 3, 2026. 77 voters checked in at the door. Total number of voters on the checklist was 790.

Moderator Chaz Hinsley called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He then proceeded to Article 1.

Article 1. To elect a Moderator, for one year

Dan Ludwig nominated Chaz Hinsley for Moderator for one year. There were no other nominations. Motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Chaz Hinsley, Moderator for one year.

The Moderator then proceeded with a few housekeeping announcements. He stated that Roberts Rules will be followed at this meeting, all motions will be addressed to the Moderator and only registered voters of the town will be allowed to speak. He will make an exception for Town of Fairlee employees that are not registered to vote in town to speak if addressed. No voting will be allowed from the balcony. He introduced Denis Lambert and Liz Wilson who would be going around with microphones for voters to use when addressing the meeting.

He asked if there were any objections from the voters to allow Representative Monique Priestley to address the voters. Hearing no objections, Representative Priestley addressed the voters thanking them for their welcome. She shared that her 2026 town meeting report handout is available to read on her website. She informed the voters that her current roles are in the House Commerce and Economic Development, the Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee, the Rural Caucus, Representative to the NCSL Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Privacy, and the Future Caucus National Task Force on AI Policy and as Legislative Trustee of the University of Vermont. She explained that Education Bill 181 and Act 250 are the main issues being addressed this year in the legislature. She encouraged the voters to please contact her anytime with concerns and questions. She was given a round of applause.

The Moderator introduced Veteran Bob Maddock Jr., who then led the flag salute.

Selectboard Chair Peter Berger, thanked outgoing Town Administrator, Ryan Lockwood for his two years of service to the town and introduced Gene Craft, the new Town Administrator.

Article 2. To hear and act upon the Town Officers' Reports.

Clyde Blake made the motion to move Article 2. The motion was seconded. Article 2 was opened for discussion. Treasurer Jessica Chase presented a correction, explaining that in the town report on page 15, in the 2025 Statement of Debt Services, the 2026 Pumper Fire Truck of \$420,000.00 was inadvertently omitted. Being there were no other corrections, the question was called. All were in favor of accepting the Town Officers Reports as corrected. The motion carried. Article 2 passed in the affirmative.

Article 3. To elect all necessary officers of the Town and to fill terms of any office that may be vacant, including:

Arlene Guest nominated Miranda Clemson for Selectboard Member for three years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Miranda Clemson as Selectboard Member for three years.

Dan Ludwig nominated Russ Collins for Lister for three years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Russ Collins as Lister for three years

Dan Ludwig nominated Keri Gelenian for Budget Committee Member for three years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Keri Gelenian as Budget Committee Member for three years.

Clyde Blake nominated Jane Chambers for Auditor for one year. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Jane Chambers as Auditor for one year.

Being there were no nominations for Auditor for two years, and with the unanimous consent of the voters, the Moderator passed over this office.

Dan Ludwig nominated Chaz Hinsley for Cemetery Commissioner for five years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Chaz Hinsley as Cemetery Commissioner for five years.

Cyrie Lange nominated Charlotte Williams for Library Trustee for five years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Charlotte Williams as Library Trustee for five years.

Tim Danen nominated Doug Tift for Planning Commission Member for two years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Doug Tift as Planning Commission Member for two years.

Tim Danen nominated Adam Pritchard for Planning Commission Member for four years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Adam Pritchard as Planning Commission Member for four years.

Gene Ordway nominated Nicole Ordway-Wood for Recreation Council Member for three years. There were no other nominations. A motion was made, seconded, and voted in the affirmative for the Clerk to cast one ballot for Nicole Ordway-Wood as Recreation Council Member for three years.

Article 4. To see what action the Town will take with regard to the following appropriations. All sums have been included in the Town Budget. A sum not to exceed:

- a) Five Hundred dollars (**\$500**) to the **American Red Cross** for disaster support (CO)
- b) Four Hundred dollars (**\$400**) to **Central Vermont Adult Basic Education, Inc.** for adult education and literacy instruction for residents of Fairlee (CO)
- c) One Thousand Two Hundred dollars (**\$1,200**) to **Central Vermont Council on Aging** for senior services including a helpline, transportation, and meal delivery (CO)
- d) One Thousand Five Hundred Forty-Five dollars (**\$1,545**) to **Clara Martin Center** for counseling services (CO)
- e) Two Hundred Fifty dollars (**\$250**) to **Cohase Chamber of Commerce** for membership (CO)
- f) Fifty dollars (**\$50**) to **Green Up Vermont** (CO)
- g) Five Thousand Two Hundred Fifty dollars (**\$5,250**) to the **Lake Fairlee Association** for milfoil eradication program (CO)

- h) Two Thousand Five Hundred dollars (**\$2,500**) to **Little Rivers Health Care** for insurance and medical assistance including mobile dental van (CO)
- i) Three Hundred dollars (**\$300**) to **Orange County Parent Child Center** helps families with young children through advocacy, support, wellness opportunities (CO)
- j) Three Hundred Fifty dollars (**\$350**) to the **Orange County Restorative Justice Center** a cost-effective alternative to the criminal court system for eligible offenders (CO)
- k) Three Thousand dollars (**\$3,000**) to the **Orange East Senior Center** for providing meal and social services at the center (CO)
- l) Three Thousand dollars (**\$3,000**) to the **Rivendell Recreation Association** to provide elementary sports and recreational activities (CO)
- m) One Thousand dollars (**\$1,000**) to **Safeline** for a hotline for crisis support and referral services (CO)
- n) Five Hundred dollars (**\$500**) to **The Mentoring Project** for young persons (CO)
- o) Three Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty One dollars (**\$3,851**) to **Tri-Valley Transit** for transportation of seniors, persons with disabilities and commuters (CO)
- p) One Hundred dollars (**\$100**) to the **Upper Valley Trails Alliance** a non-profit organization that promotes, builds, and maintains public trails and greenways in the Upper Valley region (CO)
- q) Three Hundred dollars (**\$300**) to the **Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired** for services including rehabilitation, orientation and mobility, assistive technology, social networking, and statewide transportation (CO)
- r) One Hundred Fifty-Five dollars (**\$155**) to the **Vermont Center for Independent Living** to help Vermonters with disabilities by providing the Meals on Wheels Program, Peer Advocacy Counseling Program and information and referral services (CO)
- s) Two Hundred Fifty dollars (**\$250**) for the **Vermont Family Network** for providing support to all Vermont families of children with special needs (CO)
- t) Two Hundred dollars (**\$200**) to **Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force** to support Rural Fire Protection Program (CO)
- u) Five Thousand Five Hundred dollars (**\$5,500**) to the **Visiting Nurse Alliance of VT and NH/Hospice of the Upper Valley** for home health care and hospice support services to individuals and their families (CO)
- v) Four Hundred Dollars (**\$400**) to **WISE**, an organization dedicated to supporting people and communities impacted by domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking (CO)

After reading Article 4, the Moderator said he would entertain a motion to vote on Article 4 in its entirety. Dan Ludwig made the motion to pass Article 4 in its entirety. The motion was seconded. Article 4 was opened for discussion. Hearing none, the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 4 passed in the affirmative.

Article 5. Shall the voters of the Town of Fairlee authorize the Selectboard to accept and administer any Federal, State, or private grant money?

Clyde Blake made the motion to move Article 5. The motion was seconded. Article 5 was opened for discussion. Hearing none, the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 5 passed in the affirmative.

Article 6. To act upon the Recommendations of the Budget Committee as they pertain to Highway Expenses and to appropriate a sum of money for Highway Expenses.

Budget Committee Member Rich Kenney made a motion that the Town appropriate the sum of \$334,595.00 for the Maintenance and Improvements of the Town Highways. The motion was seconded. Article 6 was opened for discussion. Tony Gahagan questioned where the highway funds would be allocated and whether they would be used for Lake Morey Road. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger explained that planned projects included work on ditches, culverts, Lake Morey Road, and Bald Top Road. He informed the voters that Terry Hill Road was fixed last fall and crack filling was done on the east side of Lake Morey Road. He added that the crack filling on Maurice Roberts Memorial Highway from 2013 has held up well. Clyde Blake expressed concern over the condition of Lake Morey Road on the west side and the number of potholes that need filling. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger confirmed it is a priority of the Selectboard to have the potholes filled this year. Hearing no further discussion the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 6 passed in the affirmative.

Article 7. To raise such sum of money as may appear necessary for the Maintenance and Improvements of the Town Highways for the ensuing year, and to authorize collection of same by the Town Treasurer under 32 VSA 4791. Property taxes shall be billed on or before September 1, 2026 and shall be due and payable on or before October 1, 2026. Interest shall be at a rate allowed by law and shall be payable on all past due taxes.

Budget Committee Member Rich Kenney made a motion that the Town raise by taxes the sum of \$275,040.00 for the Maintenance and Improvements of the Town Highways. The motion was seconded. Article 7 was opened for discussion. Hearing none, the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 7 passed in the affirmative.

Article 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Fairlee appropriate the following sums to undertake and save for capital improvements within the Town in accordance with the Capital Budget and Program adopted by the Selectboard? All sums have been included in the Town Budget. A sum not to exceed:

a) Town Buildings and Lands Reserve	\$106,573.00
b) Emergency Equipment Reserves	\$82,289.00
c) Town Highway Reserve	\$200,000.00
d) Lake Reserve	\$34,000.00
e) IT Reserve	\$10,500.00

Budget Committee Member Rich Kenney made the motion that the Town appropriate the sum of \$433,362.00 for capital improvements. The motion was seconded. Article 8 was opened for discussion and Cathy McGrath requested that an ATV be purchased for the Fire Department this year to facilitate emergency responses during ice skating on Lake Morey, noting there have been several accidents. Hearing no further discussion, the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 8 passed in the affirmative.

Article 9. To act upon the recommendations of the Budget Committee as they pertain to Town Expenditures and to appropriate a sum of money for Town Expenses.

Budget Committee Member Rich Kenney made the motion that the town appropriate the sum of \$1,526,923.00 for Town Expenses. The motion was seconded. Article 9 was opened for discussion. Hearing none, the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 9 passed in the affirmative.

Article 10. To raise such sum of money as may appear necessary for Town Expenses and Indebtedness for the ensuing year and to authorize collection of same by the Town Treasurer per 32 VSA 4791. Property taxes shall be billed on or before September 1, 2026 and shall be due and payable on or before October 1, 2026. Interest shall be at a rate allowed by law and shall be payable on all past due taxes.

Budget Committee Member Rich Kenney made the motion that the Town raise by taxes the sum of \$1,174,029.00 for Town Expenses and Indebtedness. The motion was seconded. Article 10 was opened for discussion. Hearing none, the question was called. All were in favor. The motion carried. Article 10 passed in the affirmative.

Article 11. Shall the voters of the Town of Fairlee establish a Conservation Commission as provided in 24 V.S.A. § 4501.

Clyde Blake made a motion to move Article 11, which was seconded and opened for discussion. Dan Ludwig requested that the Selectboard explain the benefits, costs, and functions of a Conservation Commission. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger explained that the article was requested by residents and that the Selectboard created a set of bylaws which are posted on the town website. He noted that a Conservation Commission can inventory the town's natural resources, manage invasive species, and collaborate with other town boards. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger added that Fairlee is the only town in the area without a commission and recalled his previous effort to establish one 20 years ago.

Regarding funding, Dan Ludwig inquired in his capacity as a Budget Committee Member. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger replied that funding would likely come from grants, volunteer time, and various organizational funds. While he anticipated a town budget line for the commission, he did not foresee it being a large-ticket item. Doug Tiffit added that the Planning Commission supports the proposal as part of the Town Plan. He reminded voters of the previous year's panel discussion with neighboring commissions and added that a commission could engage young people and would work in unison, not conflict, with other boards.

Dan Ludwig sought clarification on whether the Conservation Commission would have influence over private property. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger confirmed it would not. Dan Ludwig Forest Board Chair, asked for confirmation that the Town Forest would remain under the authority of the Forest Board. He added the Forest Board would be happy to work with a Conservation Commission. Selectboard Chair Peter Berger and Selectboard Member Miranda Clemson confirmed this, noting that these distinctions are specified in the bylaws. Kristin Williams emphasized that forming a Conservation Commission is a formal state process that provides specific grant opportunities, unlike standard committees and councils. She expressed her interest as a Recreation Council Member in collaborating with a Conservation Commission on nature activities. Hearing no further discussion, the Moderator called the question. Dan Ludwig requested a paper ballot, but the request failed to receive the required support of seven hands. A voice vote was held. All were in favor. Article 11 passed in the affirmative.

Article 12. To transact any other proper Town business that may come before this meeting.

Clyde Blake addressed the meeting concerned about the fireworks appropriation in the town budget. He expressed his unwavering support to continue the fireworks in town. He pledged to continue to donate for the fireworks.

Clyde Blake made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded. All were in favor.

Town meeting was adjourned at 10:43 am.

Attest: Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, Fairlee Town Clerk

The Moderator then read the list of deceased in 2025. A moment of silence was observed.

It was confirmed by the Town Clerk after town meeting that Adam Pritchard was not a registered voter in Fairlee at the time he was elected Planning Commission Member for 4 years. This seat has not been filled.

Approved by: Chaz Hinsley, Moderator Peter Berger, Selectboard Chair