



FAIRLEE NEWSLETTER

April 2025

TOWN MEETING 2025

The 2025 Town Meeting stretched 4 minutes longer than last years for those keeping track: 49 minutes. All articles passed. The Selectboard would like to thank the Budget Committee: Richard Kenney, Dan Ludwig and Adam Stewart for the hard work on this year's budget.

While neighboring towns saw double digit increases, Fairlee managed to keep the increase to 9.6%.

Although we can all agree that any increase is unwanted, the long hours and hard work the Budget Committee, our Financial Director: Jess Chase and our Treasurer's Assistant: Jenn Garrow paid off for Fairlee residents.

If you missed the meeting, the minutes can be read at the town website under the Government menu. Go to Agendas and Minutes > Selectboard Meetings > 2025 Selectboard Meetings or a direct link is:

<https://fairleevt.gov/2025sbmeetings>

GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT

Some may remember the summer of 2020 when a VTrans Better Connections grant funded a \$100k study called Main Street to Morey.

The grant looked at ways to improve the Route 5 streetscape and connecting the downtown village with the lake.

As part of the study, the town commissioned a plan to alleviate the stormwater drainage issues along Route 5 from Lakeside Auto to Bridge Street.

The plan was presented to the Selectboard in a detailed report in December of 2020 right at the height of COVID. This project lay dormant for a few years but was actively taken up again this year with the desire to work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and get the required permissions and permits to move this project forward with **final completion in the fall of this year.**

The project includes several "rain gardens", stormwater catch basins with plants that filter the stormwater as it is

diverted into pipes carrying the water underground. You may see Chris Rivik's presentation of the stormwater plan in the recording of the 11-24-23 Selectboard meeting : <https://bit.ly/Rt5puddles> The presentation begins 23:40 into the recording.

NEW TREASURER: JESSICS CHASE

At this year's Town Meeting Article 4 on the Warrant asked the voters to authorize the Selectboard to appoint a treasurer rather than continue to have the town elect one. Lisa Hinsley, our current Treasurer, highlighted the fact that the job had grown more and more complicated over her years as Treasurer. She expressed the difficulty she'd had in finding someone who lived in town with the requisite skills and desire. Jess Chase has been doing the job as Lisa steps back and is a knowledgeable and precise treasurer. The voters approved the Article and the Selectboard has appointed Jess as Town Treasurer in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2651f.

4TH OF JULY PARADE RETURNS

Last year the parade could not go on due to the closure of the I-91 southbound lane while VTrans worked on the Palisades. The original project was estimated to be completed within a 5-7 week period.

This changed when the initial work crew assessed the scope and determined it would take a lot more work and time to address the problem. The result was that work on the Palisades continued into the fall and brought roughly 1.3 million cars through the village.

Our initial conversations with VTrans over this year's contract specify that **no work will take place June 27 through July 13th**. This will allow both the Fairlee/Orford 4th of July parade and for the Prouty Bike Ride to use the Route 5 corridor.

LAKE MOREY SKATE TRAIL

As the ice formed Lake Morey Resort was inundated with calls over the opening of the skate trail. At the same time, the Resort was presented with an ultimatum from their insurance carrier. At issue was the fact that the Resort's insurance carrier was denying coverage and the Resort would be unable to host the annual skate trail.

Ryan Lockwood, our Town Administrator, quickly stepped up and reached out to PACIF, Fairlee's insurance underwriter. Over the next few days an agreement was reached allowing the Town of Fairlee Recreation Council to host the skate trail. **With local and national publicity, the first weeks saw thousands of participants descend on Fairlee to enjoy one of our recreation gems.**

EMERGENCY SERVICES VEHICLES

As part of the 2025 budget process the Selectboard engaged the Fairlee Fire Department and Police Chief Briggs in conversations about the status of their respective vehicles. These conversations included the two Fire Department trucks and the current Police cruiser. One result was that we will upgrade the Police cruiser with a 2024 Chevrolet Tahoe. The cost for the upgrade to this new vehicle was approved in the 2025 budget at \$73k. Our expectation is this will provide Briggs with a vehicle that will meet the needs of Fairlee for the next 5-7 years.

The Selectboard also signed a lease agreement to replace the thirty year old Fire Department Pumper at a cost of \$600k. To address the situation of having two Fire Trucks of the same age the Board submitted a FEMA firefighters grant with the hope of deferring 95% of the \$425k cost of the second truck. This continues to be a need that has to be addressed in the short term.

FACILITIES PLANNING

The Town is working on an active Facilities plan, with discussion about the Old Fire Station, the Library and the Town Hall Vault project.

Administrative Space

Currently in the Town Hall we have used space from the Historical Society to house Police Chief Briggs. In order to maintain certification he requires a secure location to house the various needs of his position including records, evidence and other items. The discussion has moved to planning and scoping of the Old Fire Station to include space for him and for other administrative needs

Library

Over the past year the Board has also been in discussion with the Library Trustees about their desire to provide more public and user space. The limitations with the current facility was highlighted in a structural engineering study done by the

Selectboard.

Vault

The Board has also initiated a project to replace the current Vault. There is an acute need to provide more space for the records and documents contained in the town vault as well as provide some climate control to better preserve the precious documents it holds.

Village Center

Bridge & Main Public Private Partnership

The Selectboard has been committed to encouraging the revitalization of the Village Center. Over the past year we have continued to work to do this through a Public-Private partnership (PPP) with Jonah Richard and his Village Ventures Partners. The Bridge & Main project will include the rehabilitation of three existing Route 5 and Bridge Street properties. This project, with the help of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) will rehabilitate the existing units and add new affordable housing units.

All units will be affordable for households that earn up to 60% of Orange County's Median Income. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program uses HUD calculations that limit household spending on rent + utilities to 30% of gross income. This is a dynamic figure, calculations may change, **yet through the requirements of the financing, delineated in the deed, the units will remain affordable in perpetuity.**

Fairlee is committed to actively facilitating much needed housing.

Village Ventures' recent project in Fairlee, 501 Main, has been awarded Efficiency Vermont's 2025 Best of the Best Award for innovation in energy efficiency, affordability, and community impact

TOWN COMMON TREEWORX

The Town contracted with Woodsman Tree Service to prune the trees at the Railroad Depot and on the Town Common. Work had not been done on the trees in some time and was extensive.

One tree on the Common is at the end of its life and will unfortunately need to be removed and replaced.

FAIRLEE FOCUS

Fairlee has an app! Download Fairlee Focus from the Apple store or Google Play. Or just scan the QR code to the right. Get important updates from the Town!

