



TOWN OF CALAIS

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ANNUAL TOWN MEETING TOWN OF CALAIS, VERMONT APPROVED

Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 9:30 am

Calais Elementary School

The meeting was called to order by Moderator, Gus Seelig at 9:42 am.

ARTICLE 1. *To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.*

The gavel was turned over to Town Clerk, Teegan Dykeman-Brown. Anne Winchester made a motion to elect Gus Seelig for the ensuing year. The motion was seconded by Marc Mihaly. ***The article was voted on and carried.*** Gus Seelig notes that Town Meeting in Calais has been taking place since 1795, according to Weston A. Cate Jr.'s book, *Forever Calais*.

ARTICLE 2. *To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers.*

Gus Seelig welcomed everyone, invited the public to ask questions about the Town Report, and reviewed the rules of order for conducting business for Town Meeting.

Gus Seelig introduced Kari Bradley, Town Administrator, who began the job four months ago, serves as the Road Commissioner, and is overseeing the treasury function. Town Treasurer, Sandra Ferver, is retiring. Kari offered kudos to the road crew, with many thanks to Toby Talbot, as he learns about running the Highway Department.

Anne Winchester, Selectboard Chair, introduced herself and thanked all the people who keep Calais running, referring to the organizational chart on the back of the Town Report.

Jamie Moorby, a lifelong Maple Corner resident, noted that serving on the Selectboard has been a lot of fun despite the challenges we have faced over the past year.

Anne Toolan moved to Calais eight years ago and has enjoyed getting to know the community over the past year.

Jordan Keyes married into the Calais community, has been here for ten years, and stated that it has been a pleasure serving with his fellow Selectboard members and charting a path for the future.

Gus Seelig reminded voters that they all had one voice, one vote at Town Meeting. Gus announced that the Meeting was being live-streamed via Zoom for the first time, but that only residents present would be able to vote. Roberts Rules of Order would guide the meeting; speakers would be required to address the moderator.

- Karen Lane expressed profound appreciation to the East Calais Community Trust with the reopening of the East Calais General store and to Jess Quinn, who runs the store.
- Barry Bernstein, a town resident for 53 years, expressed gratitude for the Town Report. Barry noted that the road conditions were the worst he had ever seen in a nearly continual mud season, and he recognized that the road crew worked very hard. He voiced concern about the amount budgeted for highway maintenance, and gravel in particular, being insufficient. He asked if the Town might need to reevaluate its grading practices. Barry asked if the proposed budget might need amending. Anne Toolan reported the Selectboard tried to minimize budget increases and that they were already looking at grading smaller sections more deeply. Anne Toolan also stated that the Town expect to get \$150,000 from state funding in the coming months for that work.

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- Mack Gardner Morse asked about the legal fees of \$112,000. Jordan Keyes noted we have ongoing litigation issues, and that in general the world is a more litigious one. Neither party in the current issue is seeking damages, so it is not covered by the town's litigation insurance.
- Linda Schutz thanked everyone for approving the appropriation for the Curtis Pond Swim Area handrail last year, and she thanked everyone who played a part to get it made and installed.
- Jan Ohlsson spoke on behalf of the Planning Commission. She pointed out the two Planning Commission vacancies and noted it's an exciting time for people, especially young people, to join the crew. The Planning Commission is getting ready to rewrite the Town Plan, so it's a time for residents to think about what they want Calais to look like in 2035. Jan referred people to the display in the back of the room to write down their most important priority. Gus Seelig thanked Jan Ohlsson for her many years of service to the town as she completes her term as the Planning Commission Chair.
- Larry Bush, Conservation Commission Chair, reported that the Commission is going to do public outreach on exotic, invasive species, a complicated issue, and they are going to hold community walks to determine the extent of the invasive species. Larry encourage folks to learn more about Act 59, which relates to community resilience and biodiversity protection and sets a state goal of having 30% of Vermont's total land area conserved by 2030 and 50% conserved by 2050.
- David Healy, Calais representative to CV Fiber, reported that 65% of the town was available to be connected to high-speed internet, with 47% of the people eligible already receiving service.
- Steve Chase noted animal expenses and VMERS went up. Jordan Keyes replied that legal fees are partly due to the union contract negotiations. Kari Bradley noted that NEMRC provided treasury services when we didn't have a treasurer. Then Sandra Ferver came back as an independent contractor to assist temporarily. Jordan Keyes explained that the animal expenses were related to animal boarding.
- Mary Alice Profitt was happy to see the Declaration of Inclusion in the Town Report.
- Anna Matheson, Friends of Calais, thanked everyone for the donations for lunch today. Town Meeting Bingo cards were distributed. This group, formerly known as the PTNO, is expanding its purpose to serve the broader Calais community.
- Daniel Keeney, WCUUSD member, thanked Kari Bradley for his long service on the WCUUSD school board. Daniel offered to answer questions about the school board, and conveyed that a preference that the state would fix the education funding issues. He noted that a Configuration Study is underway.
- Barry Bernstein thanked David Healy, who has worked for years to get CV Fiber going. Barry also noted missing Betty Busch at Town Meeting. Betty comes every year and was badly injured in a house fire last year.
- Jamie Moorby thanked everyone for the past year of growth at the Maple Corner Community Store and Whammy Bar, which was closed during the Covid pandemic. Revenue is up, and the store is undergoing a kitchen renovation that will make it better than ever.

ARTICLE 3. *To elect the following town officials:*

Trustee of Public Funds *3-year term (expires 2027)*

Scott Grzankowski is the incumbent. Rod Buck made a motion to nominate Scott Grzankowski. The motion was seconded by Barry Bernstein. No other nominations were heard. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

Cemetery Commissioner *5-year term (expires 2029)*

Michael Fullerton is the incumbent. Juanita Nunn made a motion to nominate Michael Fullerton. The motion was seconded. No other nominations were heard. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 4. *Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$1,693,548, of which \$1,367,718 shall be raised by taxes and \$325,830 by non-tax revenue?*

Anne Winchester moved the article. Craig Line noted the County Road wasn't crack sealed last year and asked what plans were for that road. Kari Bradley noted the Better Roads Grant pays for one mile at a time, and it would be top of the list to pave the southernmost part of the County Road this year. Andrew Nemethy asked about the blank space in the budget under the Treasurer salary. Kari Bradley noted the staffing model in the Town Office has changed. This year the Town Administrator will take on Treasurer duties, and the town plans to hire an Assistant Treasurer. The Highway Department has a five member crew with John Stafford serving as a working Road Foreman and two people work part time. Virtually all of the ARPA funds (\$480,000) have been obligated or spent, with the largest amounts going to CVFiber, East Calais Fire District (a public water system), and the Curtis Pond Dam renovation project. Barry Bernstein spoke about delinquent taxes and expressed his concern about the penalty charged and recommended the penalty rate be lowered. Barry noted how much money was spent on town buildings, particularly, the Town Hall, and the top floor still is unfinished. Artie Toulis clarified that the work planned for the top floor of the Town Hall is coming from donations, not taxes, and this year some grants didn't come through. They plan on putting lights and a sound system in, hopefully starting this summer. Erica Heilman voiced concerns about people who live here and want to stay here being unable to afford to. She asked about the possibility of residents making donations to a fund to help people struggling with their taxes. Pam DeAndrea inquired about the proposed interactive map system. Jordan Keyes explained that it would replace a number of interactive maps and systems we currently have to manage separately. It is a more robust system that will make a lot of processes smoother for town officials and residents. Andrew Nemethy inquired on the status of FEMA reimbursements. Kari Bradley reported we spent 1.5 million dollars for flood related repairs. Toby Talbot, Scott Bassage and Charlotte Hanna Bassage have led the effort to compile the data in the necessary format. The town has been approved for the reimbursement for the first of its many projects submitted (75% from FEMA and 12% from the State), and we should be seeing it any time now, but it has to go through many layers of review first. Marc Mihaly, State Representative, noted our town will have more success with these reimbursements than most thanks to Toby, Scott and Charlotte. The legislature approved flood reimbursement, and the governor will likely sign it into law soon. Tobin Anderson, a second-home owner, suggested taxing second homeowners more to maintain town character and help keep those full-time residents to stay here. Barry Bernstein asked to hear from the Curtis Pond Dam report, recognizing we are \$300,000 short of needed funds. Jamie Moorby thanked voters for passing the \$450,000 bond last year. She explained that they did have a shortfall of \$380,000, but they've closed half that gap through private donations. The grant they were hoping for did not come through, but they have a path forward for construction this summer as scheduled without any additional funding through the town. Jan Ohlsson made a motion to call the question. The motion was seconded, voted and carried. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 5. *Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$45,000 for the operation and maintenance of cemeteries?*

Michael Fullerton moved the article. ***The article was seconded, voted on, and carried.***

ARTICLE 6. *Shall the voters appropriate \$33,220 for library services provided through the Kellogg-Hubbard Library?*

Article moved by Barbara McAndrew. Jeff Dean, Calais representative on the KHL Board, spoke about the value of the library. He clarified that flood damage to the library was covered by grant funding and private donations. The mechanicals have been moved out of the library basement. ***The article was seconded, voted and carried.***

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ARTICLE 7. *Shall the voters appropriate the total sum of \$30,377, to meet the amounts requested by the following organizations in the Calais and the Central Vermont area, which organizations provide social services for the benefit of Calais residents, such amounts being reasonably necessary for the support thereof:*

Central Vermont Adult Basic Education	\$1,000
Central Vermont Council on Aging	\$1,400
Central Vermont Economic Development Corp.	\$ 500
Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice	\$4,150
Central Vermont Memorial Civic Center	\$ 800
Circle (formerly Battered Women's Shelter)	\$ 700
Community Connections	\$1,000
Community Harvest of Central VT	\$ 350
Elevate Youth Services (formerly Washington County Youth Service Bureau / Boys & Girls Club)	\$ 500
Family Center of Washington County	\$ 500
Friends of the Winooski River	\$ 400
Good Beginnings of Central Vermont	\$ 300
Good Samaritan Haven	\$1,500
Green Mountain Transit	\$ 859
Green Up Vermont	\$ 100
Montpelier Senior Activity Center	\$5,300
Mosaic Vermont (formerly Sexual Assault Crisis Team)	\$ 200
Old West Church Association	\$ 500
OUR House of Central Vermont	\$ 250
People's Health and Wellness Clinic	\$1,500
Rural Community Transportation	\$ 975
Twin Valley Senior Center	\$3,500
VT Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	\$ 650
Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$ 800
Washington Central Friends of Education (dba Youth First Mentoring)	\$ 800
Washington County Mental Health Services	\$1,400
Woodbury/Calais Food Shelf	\$ 443
TOTAL	\$30,377

Barry Bernstein moved the article and it was seconded. Barry made a motion to amend the article to increase the amount by 5% equally spread over the organizations above. The motion was seconded. Barbara McAndrew feels the funds should go to direct services and declined the Old West Church's increased appropriation. The amended motion was voted on and the motion failed. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 8. *Shall the voters establish a reserve fund under the control and direction of the Selectboard, to be known as the Emergency Measures Reserve Fund, for the purpose of purchasing services and supplies in the event of a town emergency?*

Anne Toolan moved the article. The motion was seconded. Nick Emlen, Emergency Management Director, spoke that these funds would be used to purchase supplies and/or services in the event of an emergency. Nick spoke about the need for volunteer assistance in the event of an emergency, referring to a roster kept by Betty Copeland that organizes volunteers. Red Cross would be holding a volunteer training next Saturday at the Calais Elementary School. With grant funding, the town was able to purchase an 18-foot antenna and install it in the bell tower at the Town Hall, the purpose of which is to reach far out when other communications are down. Trainings are ongoing. The primary emergency shelter in town is the school, the secondary shelters are the Town Hall and Maple Corner Community Center. Nick gave a huge thank you to Sarah Black for her tireless efforts during the flood. David Healy thanked Sarah Black for putting up the road maps online and keeping it up-to-date regarding road closures. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 9. *Shall the voters approve a \$1,000 appropriation to the Emergency Measures Reserve Fund?*

Jordan Keyes moved the article. ***The article was seconded, voted on and carried.***

Town Moderator, Gus Seelig, paused the Town Meeting for us to hear from our State Representative, Marc Mihaly, for an update on this legislative session.

Marc spoke about how devastating the floods were in July and the future of flooding with climate change. In 2011, the Marshfield dam had very high water. There is no real plan to implement the relevant emergency action plan in place. Marc introduced two bills that would change the regulations to have the ANR Dam Safety people with their expertise regulate the Marshfield Dam and 20 other similar dams and to study how to save people in the event of a significant flood. Marc presented a certificate for Gabrielle Malina (to Kari Bradley) for her service on the Selectboard. Marc is on the Appropriation Committee with is focusing the budget. Marc supports exploring an income tax to fund public education rather than a property tax. For those with limited resources, free tax payer help is available; contact Marc. The Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit are also available when you file your income tax returns. Marc is available to talk to people further after Town Meeting.

Mary Alice Profitt stated that people in the legislature need to be paid enough to do this work. Marc said there was a bill proposed but it did not provide medical insurance. He believed medical insurance would help a more diverse population to serve.

ARTICLE 10. *Shall the voters authorize the payment of property taxes in two equal installments, with the first installment due on or before 4 pm on a date that falls not less than 30 days after the tax bills are mailed, but not earlier than September 1, 2024, and the second installment due on or before 4 pm on Monday, November 15, 2024?*

Anne Winchester moved the article. The motion was seconded. Discussion began. Jan Ohlsson asked about quarterly installments. David Healy asked if the town could make direct withdrawals from checking accounts (ACH payment). ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 11. *Shall each property tax installment payment be made via one of the following options:*

- 1) by delivery to the Treasurer by 4 pm on or before the due dates as set forth in Article 10*
- 2) by U.S. Postal Service, with postmark on or before the due dates as set forth in Article 10; or*
- 3) by credit card payment via www.calaisvermont.gov by 4 pm on or before the due dates as set forth in Article 10?*

Anne Winchester moved the article, and it was seconded. Barbara Butler, Assistant Town Clerk, explained that the town doesn't incur the cost of credit card payments; the taxpayers do. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 12. *Shall interest in the amount of 0.5% per month or any part of a month, be charged on unpaid taxes?*

Anne Winchester moved the article. The motion was seconded. Jordan Keyes noted that the town is not collecting enough from interest and fees to cover the Delinquent Tax Collector salary. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 13. *Shall a delinquent tax penalty be set at 8% of the total amount of the 2024 delinquent tax?*

Anne Winchester moved the article. Mike Loignon asked what the current average interest rate is for loans. Mike Loignon made a motion to amend the article to lower the amount to 4%, seconded by Mack Gardner Morse. Kari Bradley noted that the Delinquent Tax Collector is a role required by state statute. The town was more than \$4,000 short last year of covering the cost of the Collector's salary, and most surrounding towns charge an 8% penalty. Barbara Butler explained the difference between a late payment and a delinquent tax payment. The amendment was voted on and the motion failed. Cynthia Gardner Morse offered to form a committee to discuss delinquent taxes. Barbara Butler reminded people that they could make monthly or quarterly payments earlier in the year to be credited toward their tax bill. Marianne Miller made a motion to call the question. The motion was voted on and carried. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 14. *Shall the voters appropriate \$69,987 to fund the operating expenses of the East Montpelier Fire Department, to be paid in quarterly installments starting July 1, 2024?*

Jordan Keyes moved the article. The motion was seconded and discussion ensued. Albert Petrella, EMFD Fire Chief, explained that the budget request was for ongoing expenses, not extra funds. He explained that it's challenging to cut funding when their services need to be available 24/7. They operate as frugally as they can. Anne Winchester noted increasingly regulations and higher cost all around. Training requirements have also increased. Call volumes are up, many of them drug related, meaning emergency workers are seeing more deaths than in the past, Chief Petrella reported. Someone suggested having the call breakdown in the Town Report. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 15. *Shall the voters appropriate \$141,903 to fund the operating expenses of the East Montpelier Ambulance, to be paid in quarterly installments starting July 1, 2024?*

Jordan Keyes moved the article. The motion was seconded. Albert Petrella, EMFD Chief, noted that the cost of salaries and benefits will continue to rise as paid staff replaces volunteers. Rose Pelchuck spoke in support of this article, having a long history with EMFD and having served as the EMFD Administrative Assistant when the ambulance service began in July 2009. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 16. *Shall the voters appropriate \$17,850.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to be added to the Department's Truck Replacement Fund, to be paid July 01, 2024?*

Jordan Keyes moved the article. ***The article was seconded, voted and carried.***

ARTICLE 17. *Shall the voters appropriate \$77,895.27 to fund the operations of the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department, including \$32,000.00 to be paid to the Capital Replacement Fund by January 01, 2025, and \$45,895.27 to be paid in quarterly installments (\$11,473.82 each) to cover operating expenses, starting July 01, 2024?*

Anne Toolan moved the article. ***The article was seconded, voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 18. *Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to apply any Highway Department fund balance at the end of the fiscal year to the Highway Department Capital Equipment Reserve Fund and do so each year until the voters vote otherwise?*

Jordan Keyes moved the article. The motion was seconded. Cynthia Gardner Morse made a motion to amend the article to strike “and do so each year until the voters vote otherwise”. Discussion ensued. The motion was voted on and failed. Rose Pelchuck stated it is similar to moving funds from your checking account to your savings account to save for a large purchase. Scott Bassage made a motion to call the question. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 19. *To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.*

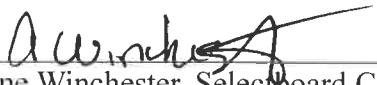
Cynthia Bellevue presented a resolution to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. She recently posted it on Front Porch Forum. Cynthia would like to send it to the Selectboard, state legislature, and the congressional delegation. Discussion ensued. Art Edelstein stated it is a rotten situation on both sides, and noted that the executive branch is calling for a ceasefire but that it is a slow process. Barry Bernstein condemned the Hamas attack on October 7th. ***Paul Hannan made a motion to table the vote on this resolution. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried.***

A Rabies Shot Clinic would be held Saturday, March 9, from 9:00 am to 12 noon at the East Montpelier Fire Department in East Montpelier village. The cost is \$20 per pet, Rose Pelchuck announced.

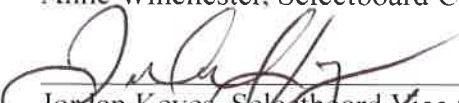
Gus Seelig bid fond farewell to Paul Hannan, former Selectboard Chair, as he and his wife are moving out of state. Gus thanked Paul for his many years serving the town on the Selectboard.

Paul Hannan made a motion to adjourn at 12:47 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried.

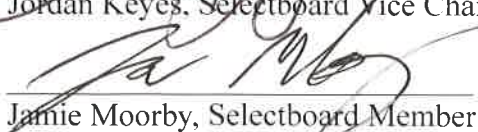
2024 Town Meeting Minutes Adopted on APRIL 8, 2024, 2024.



Anne Winchester, Selectboard Chair

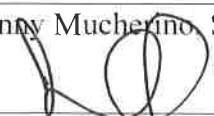


Jordan Keyes, Selectboard Vice Chair



Jamie Moorby, Selectboard Member

Donny Mucherino, Selectboard Member



Anne R. Toolan, Selectboard Member