



TOWN OF CALAIS

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ANNUAL TOWN MEETING TOWN OF CALAIS, VERMONT

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 9:30 am

Calais Elementary School

The meeting was called to order by Moderator, Gus Seelig at 9:36 am.

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

The gavel was handed to Town Clerk, Teegan Dykeman-Brown. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to elect Gus Seelig for the ensuing year. ***The article was seconded, voted on and carried.***

Gus Seelig welcomed everyone to Town Meeting and asked for each of the Selectboard members to introduce themselves. Gus spoke on the order of business for the meeting confirming every participant only has one vote and provided rules of order for discussion and voting.

ARTICLE 2. *To discuss and accept the reports of the Town Officers.*

- Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to accept the reports in the town report. The motion was seconded.
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

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

- *Trustee of Public Funds 3-yr term (expires 2029)* Rod Buck was nominated. The motion was seconded. No other nominations were heard. ***The nomination was voted on and carried.***
- *Cemetery Commission 5-yr term (expires 2031)* Michael Fullerton nominated Laura Dailey. Jordan made a **motion** to carry the nomination. No other nominations were heard. The motion was seconded. ***The nomination was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters approve total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,883,054.27 of which it is estimated \$1,529,709.27 will be raised by taxes and \$353,345.00 will be raised by non-tax revenue?

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded. Kari Bradley, Town Administrator and Town Treasurer, made a budget overview presentation. Town expense budget is proposed to be 5.4 % higher than the previous year, 5.8% when all warned articles are included. Kari confirmed there is an error in the Town Report compared to the signed Warning.

Kari made a **motion** to amend the article to accurately reflect the correct numbers. The motion was seconded.

ARTICLE 4 Amendment. Amend the article to reflect the correct numbers for total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,883,254.27 of which it is estimated \$1,529,909.27 will be raised by taxes and \$353,345.00 will be raised by non-tax revenue. ***The amendment was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 4 as amended. *Shall the voters approve total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,883,254.27 of which it is estimated \$1,529,909.27 will be raised by taxes and \$353,345.00 will be raised by non-tax revenue?*

- Barry Bernstein asked Kari to speak to the General Fund balance and why it was the amount it is and how is it invested.
- Kari confirmed the General Fund balance is the operating reserves and increased over the prior year largely due to FEMA reimbursements. He said that the Town's portion of the County Road repaving project was paid from the General Fund balance.
- Barry Bernstein asked the total cost of the County Rd paving and Jordan Keyes advised it was approximately \$260,000.00.
- Barry Bernstein asked how it was determined to carry a 35% General Fund balance and Jordan Keyes advised it was an amount recommended by VLTC and discussion within the Selectboard for planning purposes and to save for bigger projects
- Kari advised all cash is in a savings account earning 1.0% and a project for the coming year is to look for alternate investment options with higher rates of return but allowing for sufficient liquidity.
- Craig Line voiced concerns about the amount of 35% in the General Fund balance and expressed concerns it was too high.
- Craig Line inquired on the Marshfield Rd paving project details; Kari Bradley advised the town is seeking quotes now.
- John Brabant stated he learned, when on the Selectboard previously, that Selectboard can overspend a budget and did not understand why the General Fund balance needed to be so large.
- John Brabant made a **motion** to reduce the General Fund balance to 20%, the motion was seconded.
- Rachel Seelig asked where the Fund Balance is reflected in the budget; Kari Bradley advised it isn't part of the budget.
- Rachel Seelig raised a point of order that the General Fund Balance is not part of the budget being voted on and the motion is out of order for this Article; Gus confirmed they were correct.
- Jordan Keyes advised there is interest for the Selectboard to separately host a discussion with community members to draw down the General Fund Balance.
- John Brabant asked for clarification on the ruling; Gus Seelig provided clarification that the General Fund Balance is not part of the Article
- John Brabant made a **motion to amend** to reduce the proposed budget the amount required for the General Fund Balance to reflect 20% versus the current 35%. The motion was seconded.
- Kari Bradley provided context for the policy and stated some options for reducing the General Fund Balance but cautioned that with municipal budgets one-time revenues should generally be used for one-time expenditures.
- Rick Kehne asked about liabilities and recovering promised funds from disaster reimbursement.
- Kari Bradley advised there are ongoing obligations to cover and advised there are over 70 miles of Class 2 and 3 roads in Calais which are very vulnerable to the weather events.
- Mary Alice Proffit asked for clarification on the nature of the motion for reducing the General Fund Balance.
- Jonathan Hertz stated that if there is a smaller reserve fund, in the event of an emergency the Selectboard could borrow money, but he wants to know options for how the town would secure money.
- Kari Bradley confirmed the first option would be General Fund balance and then there is a line of credit with the bank the town can access but is limited. Depending on the needs, the Town may have to look to other types of borrowing.
- Nedene Martin asked about the non-tax revenue and how secure is that amount of money for future budget planning.
- Kari Bradley advised there is a breakdown of the non-tax revenue funds in the Town Report. Current Use and State Highway Aid are the two largest sources.
- Donna Smyers advised that after the 2023 flood Calais roads were repaired so much faster than the neighboring towns and she believes that is directly related to the robust General Fund balance and supports keeping the larger 35% in the General Fund balance.
- Barry Bernstein stated he understands the uncertainty of the time but welcomes a discussion such as Jordan put forth and supports leaving the General Fund balance as is at this time.
- Fletcher Dean stated thinking of it as self-insuring against future emergencies.

- Doug Lilley asked about the Kent Hill Road reconstruction project.
- Rose Pelchuck made a **motion** to call the question on the John Brabant amendment motion.
- Mercedes Pinon raised a point of order and asked for a return to Doug's question; Gus Seelig clarified the call to the question was to the amendment and not the article itself.
- Gus Seelig called a vote on the amendment. ***The Amendment was voted on and failed.***
- Jordan Keyes spoke to Doug Lilley's question regarding the paving project being completed by the town versus outside contractors.
- Jack Russell made a **motion** to call the question on the amended article. The motion was seconded.
- Gus Seelig called a vote on the article. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

Town Moderator, Gus Seelig paused the Town Meeting at 10:40 am to allow our State Representative, Marc Mihaly, and State Senator Andrew Perchlik, to speak.

Senator Perchlik advised there are a lot of struggles facing the state; the federal government funding is inconsistent and that makes it difficult to plan and budget but is working with the Governor to plan for state funding; he is proposing to get rid of state inspections or at least drastically change them to inspections only flagging truly safety issues; he acknowledged school transformation concerns and property taxes need reforming.

Marc Mihaly advised they are halfway through the session; he confirmed the chaos of the federal government continues to cause difficulty in planning; he acknowledges a lot of people are going to opt to go without insurance because of the loss of federal subsidies; he acknowledged there isn't enough housing and the housing Vermont does have is too expensive; his goal is to make housing less expensive and easier to permit; brought up the pending bill which would involve raising income tax for wealthy residents and his support for such bills.

Marc Mihaly presented Barbara Butler with a Certificate of Public Service signed by the Secretary of State for her many years of dedicated service.

John Brabant asked about a cap of unearned income and taxing it as income and also asked about the difficulties of moving the teacher's healthcare to the state employee healthcare plans. Senator Perchlik stated taxes are being looked at as well as changes for higher tax bracket; he stated he'd support merging the groups for healthcare.

ARTICLE 5. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of \$54,405.00 for the operation and maintenance of the cemeteries?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded. Michael Fullerton, Cemetery Commission Chair, spoke to the article and specifics within the requested amount. A motion to call the question was heard. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 6. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000.00 to fund the Cemetery Fence and Infrastructure Fund?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 7. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$34,881.00 for library services provided through the Kellogg-Hubbard Library?*

Bill made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Jeff Dean is the representative from Calais on the library board of trustees and spoke to the Calais use of the library; he confirmed the original request to the Selectboard was for just under a 3% increase.
- Jeff Dean made a **motion to amend** to the original request of \$35,927.00. The motion was seconded.
- Mark Brown advised a big reason for moving to the Calais area was because of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and all the services offered.
- Chris Andresen stated he was on the committee looking at expenditures in the article and confirmed there was no denial the library is a well-used resource but the committee saw expenses going up across the board in so many areas; however, the library has a lot of money coming in from outside sources so they thought level funding versus the requested increase would be sufficient
- John Rosenblum stated he’s always wondering why they don’t have their own library, and other municipal services, and funding the library to under the inflation rate is a sound ask
- Craig Line called the question on the amendment.

ARTICLE 7 Amendment. Amend the article to reflect the originally requested amount of \$35,927.00. *The amendment was voted on and carried.*

ARTICLE 7 as amended. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$35,927.00 for library services provided through the Kellogg-Hubbard Library?*

- Doug Lilley raised concerns about the flood damage; Jeff Dean confirmed all repairs were covered by FEMA funds.

The main article was voted on and carried.

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters raise and appropriate the total sum of \$31,649.00 to meet the amounts requested by the following organizations in the Calais and Central Vermont areas, which organizations provide social services for the benefit of Calais residents, such amounts being reasonably necessary for the support thereof:

Calais Historical Society	\$300
Central Vermont Adult Education	\$1,000
Central Vermont Council on Aging	\$1,400
Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation	\$500
Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice	\$4,150
Central Vermont Memorial Civic Center	\$800
Circle (formerly Battered Women’s Services & Shelter)	\$700
Community Connections	\$1,000
Community Harvest of Central Vermont	\$350
Elevate Youth Services (formerly WCYSB/Boys & Girls Club)	\$500
Family Center of Washington County	\$500
Friends of the Winooski River	\$500
Good Beginnings of Central Vermont	\$450
Good Samaritan Haven	\$1,500
Green Mountain Transit	\$859
Green Up Vermont	\$100
Montpelier Senior Activity Center	\$4,000
Mosaid Vermont (formerly Sexual Assault Crisis Team)	\$200
Old West Church Association	\$500
OUR House of Central Vermont	\$250
Peoples Health and Wellness Clinic	\$1,500
Prevent Child Abuse Vermont	\$500

Twin Valley Senior Center	\$5,000
Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	\$650
Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$800
Washington County Mental Health Services	\$1,400
Window Dressers	\$400
Woodbury/Calais Foodshelf	\$1,040
Youth First Mentoring / WCFE	\$800

TOTAL **\$31,649.00**

- Jordan Keyes made a **motion** was made to move the article. The motion was seconded.
- Barbara McAndrew spoke to each line item and any applicable changes.
- Rick Kehne asked for more information on Window Dressers; Bill Powell provided additional details on the program
- John Brabant asked to clarify the Calais Foodshelf funding request; Barbara McAndrew confirmed it was a level funding request
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 9. *Shall the voters establish a reserve fund under the control and direction of the Selectboard in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804, to be known as the “Real Estate Acquisition Fund,” for the purpose of acquiring real estate to benefit the town?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Barry Bernstein asked for clarification on the specifics of the fund.
- Jordan advised there have been several times where the Selectboard had to entertain the potential of purchasing land for various reasons such as storage for materials or building a Town Garage and there is no set fund for such potential earmarked purchases.
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 10. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of \$500.00 to fund the Real Estate Acquisition Fund?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Barry Bernstein stated he supports possibly purchasing land for building duplexes or additional housing in the future.
- Mac Gardner-Morse stated he’s wary of the town buying property as it reduces potential property taxes.
- Habib Meiloud asked how the town plans on raising money for purchasing land.
- Jordan stated the initiation of the Fund will help start the conversation around the use of the General Fund Balance or potential loans as opportunities arise but to start having the conversation
- Mercedes Pinon stated she’d like to see these funds invested in something like CDs with a higher rate of return.
- Mercedes Pinon made a motion to amend to fund via surplus of from the General Fund Balance. The motion was seconded.
- A call was made for division.
- ***The amendment was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 10 Amendment. Appropriate the sum of \$500.00 via surplus or general fund balance versus new taxes.

ARTICLE 10 as amended. *Shall the voters approve utilizing the sum of \$500.00 via surplus or general fund balance to fund the Real Estate Acquisition Fund?*

The article was voted on and carried.

ARTICLE 11. *Shall the voters authorize the payment of property taxes in two (2) equal installments, with the first installment due on or before 4:00 pm on a date that falls not less than 30 days after the tax bills are mailed but not earlier than September 1, 2026, and with the second installment due on or before 4:00 pm on Monday, November 16, 2026?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Nancy Toulis stated she sends a small portion into the town office each month.
- Barry Bernstein asked if that's an issue of the town to process; Kari confirmed there is no issue with partial payments each month; Barry stated such options should be shared more widely.
- Mercedes Pinon made a **motion to amend** for the deadline to be September 2, 2026 at 9:00 am and November 17, 2026 at 9:00 am. The motion was seconded.
- Barbara Butler stated if the 4:00 pm deadline doesn't work the payment should be dropped off the day before.
- Jordan Keyes advised there must be a deadline set at some point and the town staff needs to have a firm line of when something is due and then when it's late.
- John Brabant stated the day taxes are due, the town office should stay open late to allow for payment submissions.
- John Brabant made a **motion to amend the amendment** to reflect September 1, 2026 8:00 pm and November 16, 2026 8:00 pm.
- Mercedes Pinon stated she isn't trying to make extra work, simply asking for when the staff comes in the next morning, anything in the drop box counts as an on-time payment. Mercedes Pinon made a **motion to amend** go back to her original amendment. John Brabant dropped his friendly amendment to the amendment.
- In response to a question about impact on staff, Kari Bradley stated the specific deadline did not matter much to staff but deadlines seem to be a challenge for some folks regardless of the date or time.
- ***The amendment was voted on and failed.***
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 12. *Shall each property tax installment payment be made via one (1) of the following options:*

- 1) *By delivery to the Town Treasurer by 4:00 pm on the due dates,*
- 2) *By U.S. Postal Service or other courier, with delivery to the Town Treasurer by 4:00 pm on the due dates,*
- 3) *By credit card payment via www.calaisvermont.gov by 4:00 pm on the due dates, or*
- 4) *By ACH direct debit by the due dates?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Craig Line made a **motion to amend** for the phrasing to match the prior year's where the postmark will allow as a valid indicator of timeliness. The motion was seconded.
- Kari Bradley stated delivery delays have made it difficult for collecting tax revenue; and that multiple residents experienced issues where mail was postmarked on a different day from when they mailed their payments.
- Mercedes Pinon stated her support for the amendment.

- Mercedes Pinon made a **motion to amend the amendment** to allow for a postmark a week prior to the published due date showing good faith. The motion was seconded.
- Jordan Keyes stated the deadlines and policy phrasing allows for the town staff to not be put in a position to have to manage exceptions.
- Stephanie Kaplan made a motion to make a Call to the amendment to the amendment. ***The amendment to the amendment was voted on and failed.***
- John Brabant stated he supports accepting a postmark date.
- Nedene Martin stated she was previously the collector of delinquent taxes and that reliance on a postmark in today's age is no longer a reliable source and the town cannot ask the collector to treat residents differently when they take an oath to treat everyone equitable and unfortunately we can't rely on a the postal system as we have in the past.
- The amendment was voted on; there was a call for division.
- ***The amendment was voted on and failed.***
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 13. *Shall interest in the amount of 0.5% per month, or fraction of a month, be charged on unpaid taxes from the due date of each installment, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4873?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

The article was voted on and carried.

ARTICLE 14. *Shall the voters set the penalty charged by the collector of delinquent taxes for payments made after the due date for payments to 8.0%?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Barry Bernstein asked for additional details on number specifics and asked if there isn't a reason to reduce it to 6.0%.
- Kari Bradley stated the 8.0% offsets the cost of delinquent tax collection and serves as an incentive to pay on time.
- Earl Weller asked for clarification on how the 8.0% is charged; Kari Bradley provided additional information on the process.
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 15. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$66,168.00 to fund the operating expenses of the East Montpelier Fire Department, paid in quarterly installments starting July 1, 2026?*

Doug Lilley made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded.

- Doug expressed concern with the EMFD response time.
- James Dailey, member of East Montpelier Fire Department, shared the reality of the volunteer-based agency and explained that if there are multiple ambulance calls, there can be unfortunate delays.
- ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 16. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$154,637.00 to fund the operating expenses of the East Montpelier Ambulance, paid in quarterly installments starting July 1, 2026?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 17. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$24,888.00 to be contributed to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department for purposes of a truck loan payment in the amount of \$23,888.00 and to fund the truck maintenance reserve in the amount of \$1,000.00, both to be paid in full by July 1, 2026?*

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

ARTICLE 18. *Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$85,145.57 to be contributed to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department, consisting of (i) \$35,000.00 to fund the Capital Replacement Fund, which shall be paid in full by January 1, 2027, and (ii) \$50,145.57 for operating expenses, which shall be paid in quarterly installments (\$12,536.40), starting July 1, 2026?*

Jamie made a **motion** to move the article. The motion was seconded. ***The article was voted on and carried.***

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

- Stephanie Kaplan shared the survey she and the Calais Health Officer created to ask residents about a potential Community Nurse program.
- Barry Bernstein made a **non-binding motion** asking the Selectboard to advise Washington Central School District to keep pre-kindergarten through kindergarten in Calais. The motion was seconded. ***The motion was voted on and carried.***
- Doug Lilley expressed concern over his treatment and the fine schedule for the hay bales placed in the right-of-way.

Adjournment at 12:42 pm.