

## 2025 TOWN MEETING MINUTES

### March 3, 2025

The March 3, 2025, Annual School and Town Meeting was opened by Moderator A. Morgan Wade at 6:00 P.M.

To open the meeting, Moderator Wade welcomed Ella Gilbert, a student at Canaan Schools, to sing the National Anthem. The crowd applauded Ms. Gilbert. After the National Anthem was sung, Moderator Wade welcomed Scott Leigh to lead the crowd in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator A. Morgan Wade introduced herself and said she was elected as the Moderator.

Moderator A. Morgan Wade stated that the meetings are governed by State Laws and the Robert's Rules of Order will be modified if needed. "My goal is to help conduct the meeting, and you can always ask for a point of clarification. You can question and challenge me. Articles must be moved, seconded, and restated, and articles can be reconsidered up to the point where they can be moved, seconded, and restated. Nonvoters that want to speak should identify themselves and will be able to speak once we suspend the rules." Moderator Wade asked anyone with questions to please come to the front microphone and wait to be called on. She stated that every voter who wished to speak would get the chance before a voter would be allowed to ask another question. Moderator Wade also stated to make sure to give your name so the clerk can take notes.

Moderator Wade conducted the School business, which was adjourned at 8:05 P.M. A short recess was had. **The 2025 Annual Town meeting was opened at 8:15 P.M.** Moderator Wade began by reading the warning.

"The legal voters of the Town of Canaan are hereby warned and notified to meet in the Canaan Memorial High School Gymnasium on Monday, the 3rd day of March 2025 A.D. at 6:00 P.M. to transact the School District business from the floor, and immediately thereafter, to transact the Town business from the floor:

ARTICLE I. To elect all Town Officers required by law:" Moderator Wade requested, with no objection, to not read the entire list of officers, which will be voted on at the Canaan Municipal building tomorrow, March 4, 2025, from 8 to 7.

ARTICLE II. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan approve the proposed 2025 Town Plan as written? Again, Moderator Wade commented that voting on this article would take place at the Canaan Municipal Building tomorrow.

Moderator Wade commented that she will conduct the meeting article by article.

**ARTICLE 1. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the provisions of 32 V.S.A. §4791 in regard to the collection of current taxes by the Town Treasurer?**

A motion was made by Terrie Herr to open discussion on Article 1 and seconded by Odette Crawford. Moderator Wade reread the motion and opened the discussion.

Seeing no discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 1 passed in the affirmative.**

**ARTICLE 2. Shall the Town of Canaan vote to apply any surplus from the current fiscal year to reduce taxes in the next fiscal year?**

A motion was made by Odette Crawford to open discussion on Article 2 and seconded by Mason Smith. Moderator Wade reread the motion and opened the discussion.

Seeing no discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 2 passed in the affirmative.**

**ARTICLE 3. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,794.00 with revisions, if any, for the following agencies?**

a.	Orleans Essex VNA & Hospice, Inc.	\$ 4,400.00	pg. 71
b.	Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.	\$ 1,944.00	pg. 70
c.	Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging	\$ 1,500.00	pg. 72
d.	Tri-County Transit	\$ 2,000.00	No Report
e.	Northeast Kingdom Learning Services	\$ 1,250.00	pg. 76
f.	Umbrella, Inc.	\$ 700.00	pg. 73
g.	Canaan Naturally Connected, Inc.	\$ 2,000.00	pg. 65
h.	Canaan Historical Society	\$ 2,000.00	pg. 66
	AGENCY APPROPRIATION REQUEST TOTALS	\$ 15,794.00	

Moderator Wade asked if there were no objections, to have the townspeople vote for the total amount, as opposed to each single agency. There were no objections.

A motion was made by Judith Masson to open discussion on Article 3 and seconded by Renee Marchesseault. Moderator Wade reread the article, including each agency's name and requested amount. She then opened the discussion.

Odette Crawford asked if someone could explain what happened with Tri-County Transit this year. She stated that in previous years they have included a report in the Town Report and have asked for \$1,100. She also commented that all of the agencies noted having less services in Canaan, but all ask for the same amount of money.

Town Clerk and Treasurer Zachary Brown answered that Tri-County Transit is not the same as Rural Community Transportation, which usually requests the \$1,100.00, Odette was referring to. Brown stated that Rural Community Transportation did not garner enough signatures to have their request included in this year's town report. Conversely, Bob Rice, who is a driver for Tri-County Transit, took it upon himself to make a request for \$2,000.00 on behalf of the organization. This organization did get the signatures needed to be included.

Brown further clarified for the audience that all agency requests are the same this year. The only addition is the change from Rural Community Transportation to Tri County Transit, with an additional \$900 requested and the Canaan Historical Society who is requesting \$2,000.00 this year.

Sharon Belleville asked if Tri-County Transit comes across the bridge and services Canaan. Brown responded that they would come over to Canaan to bring residents over to New Hampshire institutions. They are just not allowed to transport someone in Vermont to a Vermont institution.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 3 was passed in the affirmative.**

**ARTICLE 4. To determine if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,000.00 for the UPPER CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL to help defray the costs of providing emergency and critical care clinic services. Pg. 62**

A motion was made by Odette Crawford to open discussion on Article 4 and seconded by Renee Marchesseault. Moderator Wade reread the motion and opened the discussion.

Odette Crawford commented that the \$4,000.00 is the same amount requested as last year. The money is used for the emergency room, and she feels the voters should consider voting on this request again this year. The hospital appreciates the money they have received from the Town in the past and hopes to do so again this year.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 4 passed in the affirmative.**

**ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan raise and appropriate the sum of \$49,150.00 to reclaim and pave, with a 2.5" depth base coat, Treatment Plant Road?**

A motion was made by Judith Masson to open discussion on Article 5 and seconded by Renee Marchesseault. Moderator Wade reread the motion and opened the discussion.

Selectboard Chair Michael Daley spoke on the article. Daley stated that it was brought to the board's attention that Treatment Plant Road was irreparable and needed to be replaced. He stated that the quote is to scarify the pavement and add a new base coat to it. The addition would widen the road and make it smooth for travel to and from the Treatment Plant and Transfer Station. Daley stated that the board did not feel strongly one way or the other on this article. They wished to bring it to the voters' attention and have them make the decision.

Renee Marchesseault asked what impact this project would have on the budget and the tax rate. Town Clerk and Treasurer Brown calculated the figure to be an additional \$0.0444 tax rate.

Noreen Labrecque asked if paving the road would bring it to a standard of a Town Road. She asked that if it did would the Town be able to receive State aid. Daley responded that it would.

Odette Crawford mentioned that she had noticed in the Colebrook Chronicle a notice that Treatment Plant Road should be made a Class IV highway. She asked if the voters would have to approve the paving project before the road could be considered for this reclassification. Selectboard Member Mark Bullard stated that once the Town brings the road to the standard of a Class IV highway with this money, then the road can be reclassified.

Town Clerk and Treasurer Brown stated that that wasn't the case for this road. He stated that the Article and the Public Notice for the hearing were not related. He stated that the paving project could be used to bring the road to a Class III highway, which would be eligible for State Aid in the future. He stated that the road, as it stands right now, meets the State of Vermont's requirements for a Class IV highway.

Mason Smith asked what the benefits of bringing the road up to a Class III standard would be. Chair Daley stated that it would allow the Town to receive funding every year and would allow the Town to look for grant opportunities to repave the road in the future.

Scott Leigh asked if the Town were sure the \$49,000 paving bill would bring it up to the Class III standard or if more money would have to be appropriated in the future. Richard Thibeault, road foreman, responded to this request. There was no objection from the voters to having Richard, a nonvoter, speak. Richard stated that the quote would bring the road up to all necessary specifications. He gave a brief overview of the project and why it was needed. Richard also stated that without being a Town road, work done to it cannot be expensed from the highway budget.

Benjamin Champagne asked how many bids the Town received for this project. He also asked if the Town had a policy on how many bids they needed to receive based on a monetary threshold. Board member Bullard responded that they try to receive as many bids as possible, but for this project, they only received two bids. The board further

responded that the bid was the lowest bid received and that the Town had a good working relationship with Gray's Paving.

Laurent Giroux asked a clarifying question on the warning. He stated that the warning amount is \$49,150, but the quote is for \$59,150. He wanted to know what the difference in the price was and if it was just a simple mistake. Chair Daley stated that \$10,000 of the project is being funded by the Sewer Capital Reserve.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 5 passed in the affirmative, with one opposition.**

**ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000.00 to offset the cost of the South Canaan Cemetery Fence replacement project?**

A motion was made by Terrie Herr to open discussion on Article 6 and seconded by Odette Crawford. Moderator Wade reread the article and opened the discussion.

Selectboard member Alfred Buckley reported on the cemetery fence and the progress that they have made thus far on the fence project. Buckley stated that the South Canaan Cemetery Fence is in grave disrepair, with many sections of the fence being held together with zip ties. He stated that the cemetery commission had commissioned David Hodge to create new sections of the rod iron fence. Buckley stated that the project would be divided into three sections and would cost a total of \$74,000. Currently, the Town has received \$20,000 from the Tillotson North Country Foundation and another \$10,000 from the Town of Canaan ARPA money. Buckley stated that they are asking for \$10,000 of taxpayer money to help keep the project moving forward. They will also be seeking funds from other grants and from private donations.

Judith Masson asked for clarification on the cost of the project and if it was going to be used all at a single cemetery. Buckley responded that the cost of the project was \$74,000 and that it would only be used to fund the project at the South Canaan Cemetery.

Odette Crawford ran through a breakdown of the project's current revenues.

Kathy Smith asked if the South Canaan Cemetery Sign could be fixed so that it reads "South" or "So." Instead of "So". Buckley stated he would get that changed.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 6 passed in the affirmative, with a few opposing the article.**

**ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the proposed Library Budget with operating expenditures totaling \$92,507.00, of which \$92,507.00 shall be raised by taxes, with revisions, if any, for the ensuing year? pg. 33**

A motion was made by Terrie Herr to open discussion on article 7 and seconded by Judith Masson. Moderator Wade reread the article and opened the discussion.

Noreen Labrecque asked a clarifying question. She asked if the total budget was coming out of tax dollars and if there were no other donations or grants reducing the total budget. She asked someone to speak to why there were no other revenue figures on the budget as there had been in years past. Shellie Bresnahan, library trustee, addressed Noreen. She stated that no donations or grants are guaranteed and, therefore, they cannot add them to the budget. She stated that the once-guaranteed \$5,000 from the Tillotson North Country Foundation has been less than consistent lately. They cannot add offsetting revenues into the budget as they need the entire \$92,507 for operating costs. Bresnahan stated that they are still working towards grants and hope to receive many. However, she did state that these grants go towards items that are not presently on the budget. The budget pays for salaries, materials, and other building-related expenses.

Noreen Labrecque further asked Shellie to explain why they are not using money from their surplus. Labrecque stated that last year, the library had \$135,749.95 in cash on hand. Town Clerk and Treasurer Brown addressed this question. Brown stated that this is made up of a surplus that has been carried over for years, way before his time. He also stated that this figure seems higher than it is and is not wholly a surplus. Brown and Bresnahan explained that tax dollars are received in October of every year, so by December, most committees have not spent their tax dollars yet. Most departments spend the previous year's tax dollars on current expenses, as they are always operating a year behind. They also stated that the Trustees plan to use what is there as a surplus to help fund the Carriage House Project. Labrecque repeated her question about why the surplus keeps growing every year and is not being used to offset tax dollars. Bresnahan stated that most of the board was unaware of the surplus until last year.

Odette Crawford asked the trustees to create a plan to help pay for the added electricity, insurance, and heating that the Carriage House renovation project will create in the coming years.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

**Article 7 passed in the affirmative.**

**ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the proposed General Budget with operating expenditures totaling \$685,770.80, of which \$592,117.80 shall be raised by taxes and \$93,653.00 by non-tax revenues, with revisions, if any, for the ensuing year? (Includes Transfer Station, Public Safety, and Articles 3 through 6) pgs. 17-20**

A motion was made by Renee Marchesseault to open discussion on article 8. This motion was seconded by Odette Crawford. Moderator Wade reread the article and opened the discussion.

Moderator Wade asked Chair Daley if he would like to give a report on the budget. Daley went through the budget line item by line item highlighting the various changes to the budget. He addressed the budget increases and decreases and the reasons behind them. The discussion was now open for questions.

Odette Crawford asked for an explanation on the Lemington HHW revenue line item and why it increased by \$3,000. Town Clerk and Treasurer Brown responded that Lemington shares the HHW events that Canaan hosts and by doing so pays for a portion of the expenses. He explained that last year Lemington did not pay their share of the 2023 expenses, so this year they have paid for both 2023 and 2024.

Renee Marchesseault questioned the mowing line items in the budget. She was under the impression, after reviewing past selectboard minutes, that mowing would be done under the Highway Budget. Chair Daley explained that the board kept these items in the budget as they were unsure if their new approach to mowing would work. They wanted to ensure that there was still money in the budget if in-house mowing did not work out. If it does, then the money budgeted for mowing in the 2025 budget will be used to offset tax dollars in the next year.

Martha VanderWolk asked for clarification on the \$11,798 that will be transferred from the general fund to the reappraisal fund. She wanted to know where it appeared in the budget. Brown addressed this question. He stated that it was an error on his part, as when he took over from Noreen, he was not aware where a few of the State Payments needed to go. The money has been sat on for two years in the general fund and will just be transferred to the reappraisal fund. Brown stated it is not in the budget as it is an internal transfer of funds.

Noreen Labrecque questioned the article itself. Her complaint was that the warned article included a parenthetical to "Include ... Articles 3 through 6". Labrecque's concerns with this are that it has already been voted on, and why would we be voting on them again? Brown addressed this question. He stated that it has always been done like this. The special appropriations have always been included in the general budget and have always been voted on as the general budget. He stated that the only difference this year is that he added the extra wording for further clarification. Labrecque asked if it should be amended to take that out. Brown stated that the dollar figure in Article 8 accounts for the special appropriations like it always has. Moderator Wade gave a summary of what had

been said. Odette Crawford questioned if we would be voting on this twice. Brown stated that no, as Moderator Wade stated, if Articles 3 through 6 had been changed in any way, the bottom line of the general budget would change, and as such, Article 8 would need to be amended to reflect that.

Noreen Labrecque moved to amend Article 8 to strike out the parenthetical “and Articles 3 through 6.” A short discussion ensued. However, the motion died for a lack of a second. Moderator Wade brought the discussion back to the original unamended motion.

Odette Crawford commented that all of the items that have been voted on so far have resulted in a tax increase, and she asked the voters to keep this in mind.

Moderator Wade asked if there were any further discussions. Seeing none, she called for a vote.

**Article 8 was passed in the affirmative.**

**ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the proposed Highway Budget, with operating expenditures totaling \$308,640.00, of which \$271,787.00 shall be raised by taxes and \$36,853.00 by non-tax revenues, with revisions, if any, for the ensuing year?**

A motion was made by Odette Crawford to open discussion on article 9 and seconded by Renee Marchesseault. Moderator Wade reread the article and opened the discussion.

Moderator Wade asked Chair Daley if he would like to give a report on the budget. Daley went through the budget line item by line item, highlighting the various changes to the budget. He addressed the budget increases and decreases and the reasons behind them. Daley also gave a brief summary of the July 2024 Flooding events and the work that the Town has been doing with FEMA. The discussion was now open to questions.

Richard Marchessault asked for clarification surrounding the increase of the Summer Maintenance salary line item. He further asked for clarification concerning the hiring of a third full time employee. He later corrected himself to state 2 full time employees. Daley responded the Richard Thibeault has given notice of his retirement to the board. Daley responded that they board felt that the new person hired to replace him will need to learn a lot from Richard. He further stated that the person who will be hired may not be green to the job of road foreman but that they will still need to learn about the Town.

Denise Wood addressed the board concerning the Town foregoing plowing the school in 2025. She expressed her concerns with the Town making this decision as she feels that it will increase the tax burden of the residents. A lengthy discussion ensued. Daley explained that the Town did offer to plow the school parking lots but for a cost of \$10,000. He stated that this would off set the Town’s cost to contract the plowing of Todd Hill. Moderator Wade seeing no motion arising from the discussion asked for the meeting to move forward and welcomed Terrie Herr to speak.



Terrie Herr made a complaint regarding the way Judd Road is graded and maintained. She asked the board to check into this.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote. Moderator Wade was not able to make a clear distinction between the Yays and the Neys. She called for a division of the house and for a show of hands.

**Article 9 passed in the affirmative, with a number in opposition and one abstention from Mason Smith.**

**ARTICLE 10. To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting. (Disclaimer: Any discussion that takes place under this article is for advisory purposes only; no action taken under this article shall be construed as legally binding action of the Canaan Selectboard or other legislative bodies within the Town of Canaan, VT).**

Benjamin Champagne questioned the board about why they went with a 5% raise this year when COLA was 3.2%. Chair Daley responded that this was done as a 5% raise was commensurate to the work and skill level of the employees. Champagne also thanked Richard Thibeault for his years of service to the Town.

Chair Daley took the opportunity to thank Selectboard Member Mark Bullard for his years of service to the Town as a selectboard member and former chair. Daley and Buckley presented Bullard with a certificate and a gift card.

Daley also asked the voters to vote in the Town Plan tomorrow as the Planning Commission spent a lot of time on it and he believes it is a good representation of the Town. Daley took the time to thank the planning commission for their work on the plan.

Daley ended the meeting by thanking April Busfield, Richard Thibeault, and Zachary Brown for all of the work they do for the Town.

**Moderator Wade called the meeting to be adjourned at 9:35 P.M.**

Submitted by:

Zachary William Brown, Town Clerk and Treasurer

Approved by:

Michael Daley, Selectboard Chair

A. Morgan Wade, Town and School Moderator