

2026 TOWN MEETING MINUTES

March 2, 2026

The March 2, 2026, Annual Town and School District Meeting was opened by Moderator A. Morgan Wade at 6:01 P.M.

To open the meeting, Moderator Wade welcomed everyone to stand and recite the pledge of allegiance. Town Clerk and Treasurer Zachary Brown lead the body.

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 role is to help you conduct the meeting, but it is your meeting. We want to reach the decisions you want to reach. If you're unsure what to call something, you can always call for a point of order, and I'll try and help you, get where we want to go. 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 stated that non-voters need to identify themselves as such and the body will need to grant you permission to speak. Moderator Wade stated she will do this by asking if there are any objections to a non-voter speaking. Moderator Wade stated that all articles need to be moved and second, then she has to reread the article and finally after that series of events can discussion open.

Moderator Wade began the official Town meeting 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 2nd day of March 2026 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: (Moderator Wade noted that the warning will be reversed and was an error. Town business will be conducted first.)

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 3, 2023, from 8:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

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 Renee Marchesseault to open discussion on Article 1 and seconded by Noreen Labrecque. 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 Terrie Herr to open discussion on Article 2 and seconded by Frank Sawicki Jr. 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 \$52,000.00 to pay the balance of the South Canaan Cemetery fence replacement project?

A motion was made by Noreen Labrecque to open discussion on Article 3 and seconded by Terrie Herr. Moderator Wade reread the motion and opened the discussion. A heated debate ensued. Robert Brousseau began discussion by asking what the overall cost of the fence was. Selectman Al Buckley stated that it cost about \$96,000. Buckley then gave a justification behind why the fence needed to be replaced, stating that the old fence had fallen into major disrepair and was rotting away. Buckley also stated that the fence originally was supposed to be installed over a three-year period, but instead the contractor went ahead and installed it all in one year. Buckley stated that this error hindered the Town from applying for any other grants.

The discussion continued with several questions ensuing on who approved of the fence. Buckley stated that he would take the blame. Selectboard Chair Michael Daley stated that the board never approved the project. Residents raised concerns about who would be liable if the Town did not pay and if the article did not pass. Chair Daley and Town Clerk and Treasurer Brown did their best to answer the questions. Both stated that they are unsure of the exact course of action, stating that they had received advice from VLCT but had not received an opinion from the Town's attorney. Daley and Brown gave an overview of grant funds received and what bills had been paid.

Martha Vanderwolk requested clarity on where the financials were accounted for as she did not see them anywhere. Brown gave a brief report on where the money was spent and where it was accounted for in previous years. Brown also gave a report on how the balance of \$52,000 was derived from. Several residents urged the board to follow their purchasing procedures moving forward, so the Town does not have a similar situation in the future.

Residents once again asked for clarity on who authorized the purchase of the fence, how checks were distributed, and if a contract was ever in place. Daley and Brown clarified that no contract had been filed in the Town and that only money that had been received was paid to the contractor. At this time Gayl Tjornehoj asked why Town records were being kept at a private home and not in the Town office, after Buckley made note that he had an initial proposal at his home. Buckley stated that it was only a copy.

Daniel Johnson asked what the next steps are if the money is not appropriated tonight. Brown gave a detailed answer with board members Mike Daley and Dillon Begin adding their thoughts. Ultimately, Brown stated that this would turn into a legal issue, if the contractor did not want to compromise with the Town. Brown also clarified that no contract, verbal or written, had been executed at a meeting. The discussion continued circling back on issues previously raised. Mario Giroux offered his advice to discuss the issue with the contractor before going to legal counsel. Daniel Johnson echoed this sentiment.

A discussion continued and the idea of postponing the vote until later at a special meeting was addressed. During this discussion, a question was raised about what the Town's purchasing policy stated. Brown gave an overview of the policy and the levels of spending and their respective requirements. Renee Marchesseault asked if the policy was followed. Brown stated that it was not.

G. Thomas Trammell Jr. made a motion to postpone Article 3, indefinitely. Daniel Wade seconded the motion. Discussion continued on the merits of postponing the meeting. Fears were raised of a lack of attendance and also that no amount of time would change the circumstances surrounding the article. Moderator Wade gave clarification on procedures to either postpone the vote or to vote it down and what the next steps of these motions would be. Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote on the motion to postpone Article 3 indefinitely. **The motion failed.**

Moderator Wade called for a vote on Article 3 in its entirety. The motion failed.

Article 3 failed with one abstention from G. Thomas Trammell Jr.

Discussion continued after Moderator Wade announced the results of the vote. Krista Rodrigue asked for clarity that the money would not just be expended without voter approval. Chair Daley assured her that another meeting would have to be called, as there is no money in the budget to pay for the fence. Gayl Tjornehoj clarified that now the fee would be \$52,000 and any legal fees that are incurred. The board stated that it was possible.

Vernon Crawford asked for clarity if the article could be readdressed after it was voted on. Moderator Wade stated that it could be as long as the body has not moved on to the next article. Without objection, Crawford continued his thoughts. Crawford would like to reopen the article to amend the amount to a lesser amount, to pay off the remainder of this year's bill. Brown stated that the Town would need to appropriate approximately \$10,000 to cover the cost of the bill.

Vernon Crawford made a motion to reopen Article 3 for discussion. Georgiana Carr seconded the motion. Moderator Wade reread Article 3. A discussion once again ensued on what the board should do following the failure of this article. Vanderwolk suggested that the article should not be reconsidered, as there are no answers to the questions the Townspeople have. **A motion to call the question was moved and seconded. Moderator Wade called for a vote on reconsideration of Article 3. The motion failed with one abstention from Daniel Wade.**

Article 3 was not reopened and has failed.

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.

A motion was made by Krista Rodrigue to open discussion on Article 4 and seconded by Julie Giroux. Moderator Wade reread the motion and opened the discussion.

Seeing no discussion, Moderator Wade called for a vote.

Article 4 passed unanimously in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan raise and appropriate the sum of \$16,271.00 with revisions, if any, for the following agencies?

a.	Orleans Essex VNA & Hospice, Inc.	\$ 4,400.00	
b.	Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.	\$ 1,944.00	
c.	Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging	\$ 1,500.00	
d.	Rural Community Transportation	\$ 1,977.00	
e.	Northeast Kingdom Learning Services	\$ 1,250.00	
f.	Umbrella, Inc.	\$ 700.00	
g.	Canaan Naturally Connected, Inc.	\$ 2,000.00	
h.	Canaan Historical Society	\$ 2,000.00	
i.	North Country Missions	\$ 500.00	
	AGENCY APPROPRIATION REQUEST TOTALS	\$ 16,271.00	

A motion was made by Renee Marchesseault to open discussion on Article 5 and seconded by Kristie Begin. Moderator Wade reread the article, with no objections she simply read the main article and not the amounts for each agency.

Martha Vanderwolk asked what North Country Missions was. Frank Sawicki Jr. gave an overview of the organization and its mission. A short discussion ensued on how the organization functions and what needs the organization has. Krista Rodrigue asked how she can contact the organization as she has patients who would greatly benefit from the services offered by North Country Missions. Frank answered her.

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

Article 5 passed unanimously in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the proposed Highway Budget, with operating expenditures totaling \$357,795.00, of which \$286,742.00 shall be raised by taxes and \$71,053.00 by non-tax revenues, with revisions, if any, for the ensuing year?

A motion was made by Kristie Begin to open discussion on **Article 6** 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 money that April Busfield and Zach Brown received for the Town in FEMA reimbursements. The discussion was now open to questions.

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

Article 6 passed unanimously in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the proposed Library Budget with operating expenditures totaling \$93,750.00, of which \$93,750.00 shall be raised by taxes, with revisions, if any, for the ensuing year?

A motion was made by Krista Rodrigue to open discussion on Article 7 and seconded by Daniel Wade. Moderator Wade reread the article and opened the discussion.

Trustee Shellie Bresnahan gave a brief overview of the budget, noting that last year the library spent approximately \$81,000 and is asking for \$93,000 this year. She justified the increase due to a few changes at the library including hiring a new library director and the training involved in that. Bresnahan took the time to introduce Melissa Sheridan the new director.

Noreen Labrecque asked about the carriage house renovation project. Specifically, what step in the process is the project on, did the Town ever vote on the project, and if the library was still receiving the full awarded grant. Bresnahan responded that the project has been put out for bids and that the grant was still active. She stated the project is not budgeted for because all expenses are reimbursed through the grant. Chair Daley responded that the board approved the grant and the project. Labrecque continued her inquiry and asked how much of an increase will there be to taxes and expenses once the project is complete. Bresnahan responded that all test show that there will be no large increase in spending, noting a new heating system and other upgrades.

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

Article 7 passed unanimously in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Canaan accept the proposed General Budget with operating expenditures totaling \$615,233.90, of which \$513,173.90 shall be raised by taxes and \$102,060.00 by non-tax revenues, with revisions, if any, for the ensuing year?

A motion was made by Daniel Johnson to open discussion on Article 8. This motion was seconded by Daniel Wade. 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 specifically pointed out how much money has been saved over the years with April Busfield taking over household hazardous waste management. Also, the reduction in expense for mowing for both the Town and the school by doing in-house mowing. The discussion was now open for questions.

Noreen Labrecque asked for clarification as Article 8 calls for appropriation of \$513,173.90 while the budget has a revenue of \$585,444.90. She was wondering what the correct amount was to be raised in taxes. Brown explained that in years past this article would also include the voted-on appropriations of all other special spending articles. Brown stated that due to some confusion that Noreen brought forth last year the board removed these totals from the article. However, these totals still remained in the budget to show a full picture of the Town's spending. Brown noted that if they did not include them then the townspeople would have to constantly amend the budget. Brown stated that the correct tax amount to be raised to fund the general budget, alone, was \$513,173.90. Martha Vanderwolk wanted the proposed tax rate to be clarified. Brown addressed this question.

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

Article 8 passed unanimously in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 9. 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).

Moderator Wade took off her “hat” as moderator to give an update on NEKCV Broadband and the gains they have made over the past year.

Krista Rodrigue asked the board to look into increasing the hours at the transfer station. She stated that when you work during the week, time to bring your waste to the transfer station is extremely limited. Chair Daley responded that the board has been considering that and has begun conversations on how to rework the transfer station.

Vernon Crawford thanked Chair Daley for his time on the board. Mike thanked him and commented that it has been a true eye opener.

Chair Daley took the opportunity to thank individuals who had retired or were retiring from their positions with the Town of Canaan: Richard Thibeault, 20 years as Road Foreman; Diana Rancourt, 11 years on the Rec Park Committee and 14 years as clerk/treasurer for Fire District 2; Wayne Washburn, 11 years as Animal Control officer; Vernon Crawford, 10 years on the Community Forest Committee; Cindy Smythe, and 3 years as Library Director. He also pointed the townspeople’s attention to the dedications of the town report this year for two special women who passed this year in Canaan (Linda Hikel 40+ years as Town Clerk/Treasurer and Hilda Lemay Centurian and the past holder of the Boston Post Cane). Daley also thanked April, Jay, and Jason for all of the hard work they do for the Town.

Daniel Johnson made a motion to adjourn the Town Meeting at 7:26 P.M. Daniel Wade seconded the motion. Moderator Wade called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously in the affirmative.

Moderator Wade called the meeting to be adjourned at 7:26 P.M. A short recess took place before transacting the school district meeting.

Submitted by:

Zachary William Brown, Town Clerk and Treasurer

Approved by:

Michael Daley, Selectboard Chair

A. Morgan Wade, Town and School Moderator