TOWN OF EAST MONTPELIER ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
March 5, 2024

The meeting was called to order by Moderator, Michael Duane at 9:40 AM

ARTICLE 1: To elect all necessary officers for the ensuing year. (**To be voted by Australian Ballot**)

Town Moderator, 1-year term
Selectboard Member, remaining 2 years of 3-year term
Selectboard Member, 3-year term
Selectboard Member, 2-year term
Lister, 3-year term
Auditor, 3-year term
Planning Commissioner, 3-year term

Planning Commissioner, 3-year term
Planning Commissioner, 3-year term
Planning Commissioner, remaining 2 years of 3-year term

The Moderator introduced all who were running for office

ARTICLE 2: Motion to discuss the report of the Selectboard was made by Michael Thompson and seconded by Ellen Knoedler. Mr. Gardner asked for volunteers to serve on the Planning Commission since there are two empty seats. The term is for three years for each seat. Mr. Gardner noted that the Selectboard report is on page 14 of the Annual Report.

- Moving through the report, he noted that the office transitions are due to life changes. The road crew staffing has been stable.
- Dealing with FEMA requirements has caused delays in getting those roads fixed. Ms. Estrin asked which roads still needed repair. Sanders Circle and Sodom Pond Road culverts has been fixed temporarily. Mr Barstow asked why the historic culvert at Sodom Pond Road was not going to be repaired. Town Administrator, Gina Jenkins, responded that the State has determined that the old structure needs to be replaced. Colin Blackwell mentioned that there are smaller culverts further down the road that could be affected.
- Ms. Knoedler found a five-dollar bill on the floor. If you've lost it, please see her.
- ARPA funding: Ginny Callan asked about the non-profit grant funding. Mr. Gardner said there were four organizations who applied for the $50,000 available. The funds were disbursed as follows: Twin Valley received $25,000; East Montpelier Trails received $10,000; All Together Now $10,000 for furnace; East Montpelier Historical Society - $5,000 for cabinetry. Other items funded included a $100,000 donation for CV Fiber, some were used to defray the tax burden, and some funding was allocated to the Capital Reserve Fund.
- The Selectboard also authorized $40,000 of ARPA funding for the preliminary sketched plan for a new town garage facility. Informational meetings will be held with a possible bond vote. We have also hired an Owner's Representative to protect our interests. Mr. Shapiro, who is very invested in green energy, has been heavily involved in the process
- Albert Petrella is the new Fire Chief and can be reached if you have questions about ambulance and fire.

ARTICLE 3: Town Garage Discussion

Hillary Farrington moved, and Ellen Knoedler seconded discussion of Article 3. Mr. Gardner reported that the physical building was built in the 1950s and equipment no longer fits into it. There is no way to make all the equipment fit. The building needs to be upgraded to reflect the updated needs. Ms. Christiansen noted that the equipment is literally parked inches away from walls and other equipment. Mr. Gardner responded to Ms. Miller's question about the role of an Owner's Representative. Mr. Gardner explained that the firm hired is VIS. Mr. Shapiro is also going to be involved along with the Selectboard in ensuring the project meets the needs and energy goals of the town. Stephen Miracle noted that the proposal is to knock down the old building. He has concerns about whether that is the best way to proceed. He suggested exploring the purchase of a different parcel and ensuring there is space for working

on and storing vehicles. He is also skeptical of the use of heat pumps and electricity to heat a new building. He reiterated that the Town explain to the architects exactly what we are looking for. Betsy Barstow wanted to know about the procedure for choosing the architect. Mr. Gardner explained the walk-through process. After submitting the RPF, there were four applications, which were narrowed down to the choice we made. Ms. Watson asked if the references had been checked and how does Guthrie Perry feel about it. TA Jenkins gave some context regarding the chosen architects. Mr. Perry conducted two site visits at other town garages that were designed by Weimann Lamphere & Associates. Chris Pratt, who is a contractor who works in energy efficiency and recommended a carbon analysis. Be performed He is concerned that new construction would be a higher carbon impact. Carole Dickson asked if materials in the building could be repurposed or reused. Mr. Gardner explained that it has not been discovered yet. Mr. Deegan mentioned that the Capitol Reserve Committee has been talking about the need for a new energy-efficient building for more than a decade. The goal of the CRC is to safeguard the assets (vehicles and equipment) of the town. Those assets need to be protected, and he supported the direction. Gene Troia echoed Mr. Deegan's thoughts. His experience as a contractor is that a new structure will best serve our purposes and be most protective of the tax base. He also suggested that a new structure be made large enough for future equipment. He asked if the Fire Department building would be taken down and asked that wastewater be addressed. Mr. Gardner has suggested combining space for the fire department with the town. This idea was not well received, but will be brought up again. Mr. Troia stated that tearing down the garage as well as the fire station garage, that may improve the site for repurposing. Is there a requirement by the State that sand piles be covered? Mr. Gardner responded that there is no requirement. Bruce Howlett asked about the scope of the project. He asked that a brief description of the project be placed on the website. Mr. Gardner noted that everything done so far is on the website. Ms. Watson suggested that pubic forums should be held and community information would be communicated. Mr. Gardner responded that this will occur. Ms. Miller asked to revisit the questions Mr. Miracle asked regarding the site. Mr. Gardner responded that a different site would cost more. If there are significant compromises, the cost will be far more. We will continue to explore other options for the site if needed. Mr. Barstow asked if there is a possibility of expanding the land footprint. Would the abutting owner be willing to sell more of it. Mr. Gardner noted that the town owns the wetlands and the town forest areas that are abutting the current site. There isn't a lot of land to gain that way.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$2,261,263** as proposed by the Selectboard, for laying out and repairing highways and for other necessary Town expenses for fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025). The Article PASSED: 844 YES 134 NO.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town authorize all property taxes for the fiscal year 2025 to be paid to the Town Treasurer, without discount in two installments and received by the Treasurer at the East Montpelier Municipal Building as follows: The first installment will be due and postmarked on or before Friday, November 15, 2024 and the second installment will be due and postmarked on or before Thursday, May 15, 2025. Moved by Ms. Starr seconded by Mr. Morey. The Article PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$51,960** for Kellogg-Hubbard Library for the support of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Sarah Swift noted that the higher ask is due to increase in benefits for staff and due to flooding. The basement is being rebuilt in a way that mitigates further flood damage. The Article PASSED: 719 YES 265 NO

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$4,500** for the Four Corners Schoolhouse Association for operating expenses during fiscal year 2025. Moved by Ms. Farrington, seconded by Ms. Knoedler. Rachael Grossman thanked the town for the funding to match the grant they received. The mold mitigation is scheduled to occur this spring and summer. The Article PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$12,000** for the East Montpelier Signpost to provide for the production and mailing of six issues of the *East Montpelier Signpost* for each East Montpelier resident household and non-resident property owner during fiscal

year 2025. Mr. Morey moved and Ms. Grossman seconded the motion. Ms. Knoedler thanked the Signpost staff. Charlotte Staples asked why they continue to ask for funding. Ms. Grossman, Treasurer, explained that town funding does not come until December. The Signpost tries to keep two years worth of operating schedule in their budget. Ann Stanton noted that no money was requested one year during the pandemic. Cost of paper and postage has risen, and the group is trying to budget conservatively. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$4,000** for East Montpelier Trails, Inc. for the enhancement, development, administration and maintenance of the trail network in East Montpelier during fiscal year 2025. Moved by Rebecca Reed, seconded by Ed Deegan. Mr. Deegan sees the trail system as a huge benefit of the community. He urged support due to the use of the trails and the wear and tear caused by climate change. Loring Starr, echoed Mr. Deegan. She thanked the "trail fairies" who cleared the trails anonymously. Nona Estrin suggested checking with landowners before cutting fallen trees. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$9,700** for the Montpelier Senior Activity Center for operating expenses during fiscal year 2025. Moved by Doug Kievit Kifer and seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$6,000** for Twin Valley Seniors, Inc. for operating expenses during fiscal year 2025. Moved by Celina Moore seconded by Ginny Callan. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$6,500** for Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice for operating expenses during fiscal year 2025. Moved by Lindy Biggs, seconded by Thomas Brazier. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$7,834** for the support of Rural Community Transportation, Inc. (RCT) to provide services to residents of the Town of East Montpelier, including $6,834 as its RCT portion of the fiscal year 2025 share of the annual ongoing cost of providing the commuter bus service along Route 2 with service into East Montpelier and $1,000 as its fiscal year 2025 share of the annual ongoing cost of providing the commuter bus service along Routes 14 & 15 with service into East Montpelier. This appropriation funds a portion of the total cost of the service, which will also be supported by appropriations from other towns, State and Federal funds, and rider fares. Moved by Rachael Grossman seconded by Ms. Reed. Margaret Grant asked if the transportation agency is planning to go up County Road. Mr. Gardner does not have the ridership to enhance routes. Mr. Etnier said they move into a new route slowly but beginning a commuter van. If ridership increases, they may consider establishing a route. There was discussion regarding the coordination between the two agencies that provide transportation. Ms. Callan spoke about Go For Vermont that provides transportation with EVs. Ms. Starr spoke to the part of the service shown in Article 15. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town raise the sum of **$1,499** as its Green Mountain Transit portion of the fiscal year 2025 share of the annual ongoing cost of providing the commuter bus service along Route 2 with service into East Montpelier. This appropriation funds a portion of the total cost of the service, which will also be supported by appropriations from other towns, State and Federal funds, and rider fares. Moved by Ms. Carpenter, seconded by Ms. Reed. Mr. Thompson asked why the numbers are not even numbers? Mr. Thompson proposed to add $1 to this article for $1,500. The amendment PASSED by voice vote. The AMENDED motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town raise the amounts listed below as recommended by the Town's Funding Request Study Committee for the following organizations for fiscal year 2025.

1)	American Red Cross	$	250
2)	Big Heavy World	$	250
3)	Capstone Community Action (formerly CVCAC)	$	500
4)	Central VT Adult Basic Education	$	750
5)	Central VT Council on Aging	$	1,875
6)	Central VT Disaster Animal Response Team (CVDART)	$	200
7)	Central VT Habitat for Humanity	$	350
8)	Central VT Memorial Civic Center	$	1,000
9)	Circle (formerly Battered Women's Services & Shelter)	$	675
10)	Community Connections	$	2,500
11)	Community Harvest of Central VT	$	400
12)	Downstreet Housing & Community Development	$	150
13)	Elevate Youth Services	$	500
14)	Family Center of Washington County	$	500
15)	Friends of the Winooski River	$	300
16)	Good Beginnings of Central VT	$	300
17)	Good Samaritan Haven	$	2,000
18)	Green Mountain Transit (GMT)	$	1,366
19)	Green Up Vermont	$	150
20)	HomeShare Vermont	$	800
21)	North Branch Nature Center	$	1,000
22)	Onion River Food Shelf, Inc.	$	1,000
23)	OUR House of Central VT	$	250
24)	People's Health & Wellness Clinic	$	1,250
25)	Prevent Child Abuse Vermont	$	300
26)	T W Wood Gallery	$	750
27)	VT Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired	$	150
28)	Vermont Bar Foundation	$	2,000
29)	VT Center for Independent Living	$	400
30)	VT Family Network	$	500
31)	Washington County Diversion Program	$	600
32)	Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District	$	600
33)	Youth First Mentoring (formerly Girls/Boyz First Mentori	$	300
	Total	**$**	**23,916**

Moved by Julie Potter seconded by Ms. Watson. Ms. Ashley asked why we are giving money to GMT again. Mr. Gardner responded that The amount in this segment is for senior and appointments. This also serves the Senior Center. Ms. Carpenter thanked the Funding Study Committee and noted that these organizations are run mostly by volunteers. Mr. Charles Johnson was pleased that Youth First Mentoring changed their name. Mr. Gardner explained that the funding study committee vets every request. Mr. Etnier suggested that Article 6 forward are similar. The organizations that are not in Article 15, are recommended by the Seletboard. Mr. Morey asked why the VT Bar Association has 10% of the budget and what they do. Mr. Eric responded that this is funding for legal aid. Vermont Legal Aid is funded by the VT Bar Association. Mr. Nathan Phillips saw that this served many residents this year. Diana Fielder thanked the resident sfor their support for the Onion River Food Shelf. The hours are now 9am – 2 p.m on Wednesdays. Mr. Donald Welch reminded the audience why we now vote on the Article this way. Mr. Dave Stanton talked about how this lumped together. Liz Benjamin asked if the Signpost could have articles about these organizations. Carol Dickson asked what happens if the $25,000 cap is reached. Mr. Gardner responded that suggested that any appropriations would need to be kept under the cap. If the request is large enough, it will be moved out as a separate article. The cap used to be $10,000. In the early part of the century, it was raised to $25,000. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

ARTICLE 16: To transact any other business that may properly come before the meeting.

Ms. Carpenter, representing the Friends of Coburn Pond, told the audience they would be starting a fundraiser. Members participate in Green Up and with Winooski River clean up. Look for their new web page coming soon.

Steven Miracle representing the Energy Committee, is working on compliance Act 174 and meeting the determination of Energy Compliance as outlined in the Town Plan. There will be opportunities for public comment.

Patty Giavara, member of Emergency Preparedness Committee, goal is to be ready to help ourselves and neighbors during natural disasters. The group collaborates with Calais to learn how they can work together and attend training with them. There are handouts on the table outside the gym. Ms. Estrin thanked the East Montpelier Postmaster for doing his best throughout the recent months to keep mail delivery going.

Ms. Miller is asking for more involvement in the scheduling of the school and town meetings. Currently, the school overlaps with the town. She feels that this discourages involvement with both.

Ms. Grossman noted that some towns hire community nurses. The State may be funding those positions in the future. She would like the Selectboard to investigate that.

Special thanks to Sue Racanelli for organizing the lunch potluck for the last many years. Is anyone interested in picking that up? If not, there will not be lunch next year.

The Planning Commission is in the process of conducting a survey for the Town Plan . a paper copy of the survey is available on the handout table outside the gym and at the town office after Town Meeting.

Mr. Deegan thanked the towns volunteers, staff and selectboard for their work. He suggested that the town increase the Selectboard stipend next year.

Abby Jenne, of the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation requested permission to speak. She reviewed the free resources and support for businesses and entrepreneurs available through her organization. Go to www.centralvermont.org or email her at abby@centralvermont.org for more information specific to individual business' needs.

Mr. Morey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Reed. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

Minutes approved this _____ day of March, 2024.

_____	_____
Seth Gardner	**Carl Etnier**
_____	_____
Zoe Christiansen	**Scott Hess**
_____	_____
Tom Brazier	**Michael Duane, Moderator**

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Rosie Laquerre, Town Clerk