

# SANDGATE, VERMONT TOWN MEETING MINUTES

## MARCH 2, 2026

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:02pm

Attendance: Town Moderator Sheila Kearns presiding  
All members of Selectboard in attendance  
Sandgate citizens: 37  
Minute taker: Jessica Lewis Stevens

**Introductions and welcome** from Sheila

**Article 1:** To vote on the following Town and School Officers.

No comments

**Article 2:** To hear and act on the reports of the Town officers.

No motion required.

- Rick Dahm inquires to Selectboard regarding Sandgate plow truck running during recent storm; Plow trucks not starting at the same time when school is out as when school is in session and he is inquiring as to why the delay in plowing. Janice Garrison states this could be a state decision; Jay Wilson, Road Foreman, elaborates that this decision is made on a storm-by-storm basis considering the forecast and the availability of salt to conserve resources and best address the conditions for the most citizens in Sandgate. No state policy is known regarding when plowing is required based on whether or not school is in session.
- Jim Henderson recalls that Minutes from prior Town Meeting are typically included in Town Report and they are not this year; Linda Schmidt reports and Sheila Kearns concurs that there were not Minutes available from last year's meeting. School meeting Minutes were also unavailable from last year.
- Suzy DePeyster raises the question whether the photo on the cover of the Town Report was taken by a local artist or is related to Sandgate. It is suggested that more Sandgate specific art and photos be included. Joe Nolan speaks to the rush of putting the Report together this year and the efforts of all the hands that helped put it together. Valerie DePeyster states that photos from Sandgate are encouraged for the Town Report.
- Jeff Shonberg asks on p. 35 about school tuition payments and comments on his support for the School Choice program in Vermont.
- Phyllis Skidmore, Lister, notes a mistake on the vital statistics that it should state Adam Hess married Ashley Coones, not John Hess.

**Article 3:** Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to borrow money, in anticipation of taxes, to pay current expenses of the Town for the ensuing year?

Valerie DePeyster moves; Phyllis Skidmore seconds; All in favor.

**Article 4:** Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to spend budget surplus funds (if there are any) in the next fiscal year?

Margaret Phelps moves; Al Clayton seconds

- Shelley Finn raises the question whether if there is a budget surplus does the surplus stay in the relegated line items or go into the General Fund? Linda Schmidt, Selectboard member, states the funds initially go into the General Fund and may later be redistributed where needed.
- Rich Dahm inquires as to what has been done in the past with budget surplus. Joe Nolan, Selectboard member, states this would affect taxes the following year. Al Clayton asks if there is a town emergency fund. Joe Nolan speaks to the Rainy Day Fund where funds are made available for necessary purchases. Jim Henderson asks if the money automatically goes into the Rainy Day Fund. Suzy DePeyster states if there are surplus funds it is reflected in following year's tax rate.
- Rick Dahm asks whether budget surplus for Highway Fund and General Fund are differentiated and Linda Schmidt confirms they remain separate.
- Julie Robertson recommends a new name for the Rainy Day Fund as it seems unprofessional and unclear what the money is intended for.
- Nicole Duch asks if we expect there to be budget surplus funds. Sheila directs her to the budget figures in the Report to identify where there may be surpluses at the end of the year.

**Vote on Article 4:** One objection, motion passes

**Article 5:** Shall the Town of Sandgate vote to approve the collection of the Town and School taxes to be due on or before October 1, 2026?

Suzy DePeyster motions; Janice Garrison seconds; All in favor.

**Article 6:** Shall the Town of Sandgate appropriate \$9,500 to the Arlington Rescue Squad?

- Julie Robertson moves; Al Clayton seconds
- Julie Robertson states this is likely a minimal amount compared to the service provided.
- Margaret Phelps asks if the Rescue Squad requested this amount, Joe Nolan confirms the Rescue Squad did request this amount specifically. Linda Schmidt speaks to appropriations and states that all groups receiving Town appropriations are generally and will be asked to submit requests. Margaret Phelps states this was asked for last year and Linda states that most of them do. Al Clayton states in regards to the request that there could be a letter soliciting the requests and Linda Schmidt confirms this is the Selectboard's plan. The requests will be sent in November with the appropriation checks.

**Vote on Article 6:** All in favor

**Article 7:** Shall the Town of Sandgate vote \$1,200 in support of Arlington Nursing Services?

Valerie DePeyster moves; Margaret Phelps seconds

- Al Clayton asks what services the Arlington Nursing Services are supporting and how steady that support is required. Sheila directs him to p. 52 for the general report on the work they do, it is unknown whether they sent a specific report to the Selectboard. Valerie DePeyster states that she is aware of them working within Sandgate. Phyllis Skidmore states they offer dental clinics, support visiting nurses, and make funding available for people that need assistance with purchases of eyeglasses, dental work, etc. Al Clayton asks how the amount is determined for this request. The consensus is the Nursing Services have requested this amount and it rolls over from year to year but will be evaluated.

**Vote on Article 7:** All in favor

**Article 8:** Shall the Town of Sandgate vote \$3,000 in support of Arlington Recreation Park?

Margaret Phelps moves; Brad Kessler seconds

- Margaret Phelps asks if this was their request. Linda Schmidt states this amount has been recurring from year to year per their request.

**Vote on Article 8:** All in favor

**Article 9:** Shall the Town of Sandgate vote \$28,000 in support of the Arlington Fire Squad?

Jim Henderson moves; Dan Reap seconds

- Jim Henderson states as Sandgate does not have their own fire department, we rely on Arlington and their dedication to serve our citizens. Jim states concern/hope for younger people stepping into volunteer roles. Suzy dePeyster states there are about half dozen young people training with the squad now. Valerie dePeyster shares her support for the Squad. Linda Schmidt states the Fire Department Treasurer came to speak with the Selectboard to make their request. Phyllis Skidmore expresses gratitude for Brian and Jamie who came to speak to the Sandgate Community Table about fire safety.

**Vote on Article 9:** All in favor

**Article 10:** Shall the Town of Sandgate appropriate \$4,180 for the Martha Canfield Library?

Brad Kessler motions; Phyllis Skidmore seconds

- Suzy dePeyster asks if the amount is prorated or based on the population of the town. Kyrra April, Library Director, states that the amount is in fact prorated based on population and an official request was submitted for this amount. Kyrra invites the town to a May 9th celebration of the Library's 30 years of service in their current location.
- Rick Dahm expresses support for the library.

**Vote on Article 10:** one objection, motion passes.

**Article 11:** Shall the Town of Sandgate vote to appropriate the total sum of \$2,957 for the following: Arlington Area Childcare, \$750; Arlington Community House, \$100; Bennington County Child Advocacy, \$200; Bennington County Conservation District, \$300; Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC), \$137; Burdett Commons, \$75; Center for Independent Living, \$95; Center for Restorative Justice, \$250;

Green-Up Day, \$50; PAVE, \$100; Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, \$600; Tutorial Center, \$200; VT Association of Conservation Districts, \$100?

Reggie Tschorn moves; Pat Hall seconds

- Julie Robertson asks about Burdett Commons and whether they are still in operation. Linda confirms this should be removed, and Sheila states an amendment will be made to the article to remove this item.

Julie Robertson moves to **amend this Article** to exclude the Commons; Valerie DePeyster seconds

Substitute Article now on the floor. **\$2882** is the new amount.

**Vote to replace with the substitute Article:** All in favor

- Margaret Phelps speaks to the substitute Article: she inquires why we are contributing money to Arlington Area Childcare. Al Clayton makes a motion to line-item through each appropriation to discuss each one. Sheila states that Articles cannot be added to warning, we can only amend the Articles as they exist. Julie Robertson asks Margaret where she sees that Childcare is being paid twice. She states she is also paying childcare subsidies from her own paycheck in payroll tax and doesn't think they should be paying twice. Jim Henderson states that this may not be the case across the board. Al Clayton states that the employer has the option to pay the tax or share the burden with the employee.
- Rick Dahm asks if the Arlington Childcare is free or not, consensus confirms it is not.
- Linda Schmidt states that in the late fall would be an opportunity to discuss the content of the Articles at a warned Selectboard meeting if folks wish to go item by item.

**Vote on Article 11:** All in favor

**Article 12:** Shall the Town vote to adopt a budget of \$728,182 to defray expenses of the Town for the period from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027?

Margaret Phelps motions; Phyllis Skidmore seconds

- Phyllis Skidmore asks if this amount needs to be changed based on Amendment to Article 11. Linda Schmidt states new amount is **\$728,107**
- Brad Kessler asks if someone can speak to the proposed change and increases in the Assistant Town Clerk salary. Joe Nolan states the amount was raised to get more support to previous Town Clerk and the new amount reflects that. With the appointment of the new Town Clerk, that money may not be used. Rick Dahm asks if this will be one of the potential budget surpluses, and Sheila states this is likely. Linda reiterates this money was appropriated when there was an anticipation of this need but the Town may opt not to use it. This surplus would be returned to the General Fund and reflected the following year.

**Vote on Article 12:** All in favor

**Representative Kathleen James** speaks on healthcare with statewide changes helping to defray costs; updates to housing legislation; increased state funds to support housing projects; reflections on Act 73 Education Reform Bill

**Article 13:** Shall the Independent Audit line item balance be carried over to the Independent Audit Reserve Fund?

Phyllis Skidmore moves; Margaret Phelps seconds

- Selectboard is asked to explain why this Article appears. Linda Schmidt states the Town is overdue for a professional independent audit. It has not been done in Sandgate for more than 10 years.

**Vote on Article 13:** All in favor

**Article 14:** To transact any business of a nonbinding nature

Pat Hall would like to address two concerns:

**Green-Up Day:** Pat states it has been disorganized and requests it be returned to its intended purpose of cleaning up the roadsides. She states there is a need for clarifying the purpose of Green-Up Day and suggests forming a committee to create posters that clarify the intentions and regulations. Suzy DePeyster suggests creating a map for folks to designate areas to volunteer to cover.

Linda Schmidt states Wednesday night the Selectboard will be making appointments, and those interested in joining the Green-Up Day committee should attend. Jim Henderson agrees with Pat Hall and states this was discussed last year after Green-Up Day at the Selectboard meeting. Valerie DePeyster states there is a need for trash removal around town year-round.

Pat's second concern: She is concerned about **road signs being stolen**, specifically from two roads. She encourages folks to turn in those who are stealing them.

Margaret Phelps thanks those who attended the **Christmas Party** and remarks on the strong turnout compared to previous years.

Julie Robertson asks if the **Town Clerk hours** are going to change. Jessica Lewis Stevens states the hours will not change and the Town Clerk will be in the office Monday through Thursday with Katie Kenny retaining her Tuesday hours.

Reggie Tschorn thanks the **Town Road Crew** for their excellent work.

Janice Garrison thanks Jay and the Road Crew for the **picnic at the Town Garage**.

Pat Hall thanks those who contributed to **helping a neighbor** with their heating bill.

**Meeting adjourned:** 8:34pm

*Respectfully submitted by Jessica Lewis Stevens*