

TOWN OF FAIR HAVEN, VERMONT

Selectboard, Water & Sewer Commissioners, Liquor commissioners, Cemetery Commissioners

REGULAR Meeting -- Tuesday, January 6, 2026 -- 7:00 P.M.

Zoom Meeting Link: <http://us02web.zoom.us/j/85646551688>

Phone: 1 929 2005 6099 | Meeting ID: 8564 655 1688

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Chadd Viger, Glen Traverse, Rich Greenough, Keith Hier, Sam Lucci.

Others Present: Town Manager Joe Gunter, Recording Secretary Claire Stanley, Rose Anne VanLew, Ann Finley, Johnathan J. Billewicz, Lillian E. Billewicz, Mike Murphy, John Burgent, Matt Calcagri, Bob Wilcox, Cindy Pritchard, David Amon.

Call to Order: Chairman Traverse called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Amendments to the Agenda: Mr. Viger **made a motion** to add "RC Flyers" as item 2a on the agenda; seconded by Mr. Hier and passed.

Mr. Viger **made a motion** to add "Contract 1 VSA 313 (A)(1)" to Executive Session; seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed.

RC Flyers: Mr. Murphy introduced the new members of the RC Flyers Committee noting that they have been flying at the Fair Haven Air Park for 30 years. They request permission to use the field again in the summer of 2026. He said the Fun Fly event is their biggest fund raiser and plan to have it again this year attracting flyers from surrounding states and Canada that camp at the Air Park. RC Flyers will make a \$1,000 donation to the Town. He inquired re: mowing the field as last year there was question re: Bobolink nesting; potholes being filled and access (gate locked). Manager Gunter said the field would be mowed; the gate is locked to deter vandalism. The consensus of the Board is to allow RC Flyers to use the Air Park over the summer of 2026.

Option Tax Discussion: To get a better revenue estimate, Manager Gunter said he spoke with the State, and a comparison was made with the Town of Wilmington that has a similar household income and population. They are a ski Town; we have the lake and overflow from Killington. The State has increased the Town portion from 70% to 75%. Wilmington was collecting on average \$136,631 per quarter. Based on comparison we can say without exaggeration that revenues generated will be in excess of \$400,000 per year. A handout was presented, Local Option Tax Information, that details what is and is not taxed, details of what the funds will be used for. Important water/sewer, sidewalk, roads, playground projects totaling approximately \$4 million are coming up in the next 3 years. Without the Options tax, water bills and property tax bills would see a large increase. Lengthy discussion followed. It was noted that Options tax is paid when shopping in other surrounding Towns. At an inquiry from the audience, if the Option tax

had been voted in the last time it was on the ballot, the Town would have raised \$1 ½ million. The recent waterline repair cost \$1.7 million. When asked from the audience, Manager Gunter said he recommends setting up a special reserve fund dedicated to being used for infrastructure. Mr. Lucci noted that ideally, it would be spent every year on dedicated projects. Ms. Pritchard said, people don't trust administration to do what they say they will do. Is there some kind of overview to guarantee the money will be spent as it is promised. Mr. Traverse said, if people feel what we say is not being done, call us out on it. Mr. Lucci said the Board reviews expenditures bi-weekly. Mr. Billewicz asked re: local voted Town Auditors. Mr. Traverse said they have been invited and have not attended meetings. Ms. Billewicz reviewed federal funds earmarked by Representative Welch that were used for the Municipal Building renovation. Ms. Billewicz said there is need to look at the difference between want and need. Mr. Lucci noted this conversation is outside of the Article about Options Tax. At an audience inquiry, alternatives to an Options tax are to raise water/sewer and tax bills; or not doing the projects (kicking the can down the road) because there is no money. Ms. VanLew reported that the last 2 times this was on the ballot, she voted no because she felt we needed to bring business to Town to raise the tax base. Now she feels this only makes sense. Mr. Lucci said when a business charges Options tax, the tax is paid by the consumer; the business then turns that money to the Town where it is collected. Ex. \$100 sale = \$1.00 to the Town. Mr. Hier said, re: wants and needs, don't want higher taxes; need roads, need water/sewer; need to pass this Options tax; it benefits business and the Town. At Ms. VanLew's inquiry, yes it can be rescinded. It was noted that the leak at the water plant needs to be fixed; the Fourth Street sewer line needs to be fixed. Mr. Lucci noted that \$1,000 spent = \$10.00 Option tax. When people talk to him as a Board member, they always start with what they want to see done. Mr. Viger feels everything has been said, that visitors helping with infrastructure (potholes, larger items) this is the best way forward. Mr. Greenough said we need help; the 1% Options tax will help; in time, in the future projects will get done.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Greenough **made a motion** to approve the minutes of the December 23, 2025, meeting as written; seconded by Mr. Hier. The motion carried with Mr. Viger abstaining.

Department Head Reports: **Manager Gunter** reported:

*** Police**

- * 1 arrest (1 yr. to date)
- * 31 Traffic/Municipal violations (31 yr. to date)
- * 3 sets of civilian fingerprints (3 yr. to date)
- * 62 calls for service (62 yr. to date)

Town Manager Report & Communication:

DPW has dealt with two winter events; the ice storm was difficult; continue to remove built up ice and clear intersections.

- * Painting the upstairs ceiling has turned out to be a bigger job than expected. Continue to work at it.
- * The Fire Dept. has started moving to their new room; have been doing cleaning as well.
- * Have moved a mountain of junk to the Swap Shop; more to be done.

- * The Free Press has nominated the Food Truck Frenzy as Best Local Event
- * Will pass on the Prospect Street Housing Development to the Board for review as it should be a Fair Haven vision
- * There is a Court hearing dealing with the Airport Road Mobile Home Park scheduled for Jan. 14
- * Need to button up the warning by the 15th

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Budget Review – Final Review of Expenses: Chairman Traverse said that at the last meeting the Board asked Manager Gunter to find and make reductions to the budget. Members reviewed the changes made that reduced the budget to 4.25% increase. Mr. Viger said this leaves no room for error. Mr. Greenough noted that it is the same in other Towns; that people are struggling; that we'll be in trouble down the road without the Options tax. Mr. Viger said, we asked Joe to bring it down; he did that; he asked Manager Gunter if he was sure. Manager Gunter said he is not comfortable, it makes him nervous; we'll do what we have to. Mr. Viger said this is a fiscally responsible budget that does not allow for any urgent unexpected events. Chairman Traverse said it's tough, but that he wants a budget that will pass. Manager Gunter said that last year, the Town bought a building and a fire truck totaling \$88,000; the total increase to this budget is \$118,000. Lengthy discussion followed including that appropriations total \$418,506.00. Mr. Hier **made a motion to approve** the 010 and 030 budget at 4.25 increase; seconded by Mr. Greenough. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Viger said he supports this budget, but if the Options tax does not pass, we cannot continue to kick the can down the road; that we must find a way to add funding to the budget to get things done.

Final Review of Revenues: Mr. Viger **made a motion to accept** the 010 and 030 budget revenue as presented; seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed unanimously.

Proposed Warning Articles: Members reviewed a draft of the Warning to be voted on March 3, 2026, making minor language changes and noting appropriation increases. Article 2 shows the amount to be raised by taxes -- \$2,293,292. Manager Gunter brought attention to Article 5, the Local Options Sales Tax and, speaking to the PEG-TV audience, assured Fair Haven residents that the Town will not misuse funds. Mr. Viger discussed the playground baseball field backstop noting that it is not one of the appropriations on the warning. Chairman Traverse said that it was placed as one of the items to be addressed by the Options tax.

Two Minutes for Public Comment: Ms. VanLew said after seeing all the complaints on the internet about the storms and sanding she was thinking that in the past there were more DPW workers and sanding was done in a more timely manner. She said she is willing to pay more for service and there is need to consider adding another person. Mrs. Stanley noted that sanding roads earlier after a storm would not stop internet complaints.

Parking Lot: No discussion

Board Roundtable: Mr. Lucci said he was not aware there is sand available for people to pick up for use at their homes. Manager Gunter said anyone can have 10 gallons per storm.

Mr. Hier said the sidewalks were not cleared on Sunday as they were walking downtown. Manager Gunter said they will try to do better clearing the downtown sidewalks. It has always been understood that businesses cleared their storefronts.

Review of Financial Reports: The checkbook status is **-\$807,380.29** Manager Gunter said he has called the State and was told they are waiting for one piece of paper to be able to make payment.

Mr. Viger **made a motion** to pay the Accounts Payable (General), \$60,481.10; seconded by Mr. Greenough. This amount includes Cargill (salt) \$8,855.90, Durable Home Products (insulation) \$9,565.00, MVP \$20,261.16. The motion carried.

Mr. Greenough said there were complaints -- we got rain at 21° -- salt did not work, it's too cold. People have to understand, give it a chance; people need to slow down, need time to clear ice.

Mr. Viger **Made a motion** to pay the Payroll warrant, \$35,179.93; seconded by Mr. Lucci and passed.

Executive Session:

Adjourn: The Board came out of executive session at 9:48pm

Mr. Viger made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Lucci. Meeting **adjourned** at 9:49

Respectfully submitted, Claire Stanley

Board Clerk