

**Town of Fair Haven  
Town Meeting Minutes  
March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026, 7:00pm**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Moderator Ceil Hunt.

All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Town Moderator Ceil Hunt announced the format of the meeting and reviewed Robert's Rules of Order. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom and warned in accordance with necessary guidelines.

Present: Selectboard members: Glen Traverse, Rich Greenough, Keith Hier, Chadd Viger, Sam Lucci; Town Manager, Joe Gunter; Moderator, Ceil Hunt; Minute taker, Bree Gunter

Representative William Canfield began the meeting with a report on the education transformation reform bill. The Ways and Means Committee has been working on cleaning up language on Act 73. All municipalities would be placed on a six-year schedule of review. Non-Homestead Residential is under consideration as a new tax property designation in addition to the current designations of Homestead and Non-Homestead. Another bill is being discussed that would create a prescription drug card to assist residents with meeting their deductibles. Representative Canfield also noted that improvements that were to begin in 2026 on Route 22a are going to being in 2028 instead. He reported on his "no" vote on ICE activities; he had an issue with the language of this resolution regarding due process. Curt Hier asked about the regional assessment, whether it would open the backlog, and also asked whether it would be revenue-neutral. Representative Canfield replied that it was designed to address the backlog; tax rates would have to balance among other towns. Ivan Smith asked whether what happened in Minneapolis would have happened if Trump hadn't been President; Representative Canfield said no. Bob Richards commented that Route 22a needs to be repaired, not a limited-access highway. He also asked about a news story he heard today about consolidation of education. Representative Canfield noted that some legislators are pushing for a two-year voluntary consolidation before making it mandatory. Sean Galvin asked about paying multiple superintendents and whether school consolidation would address top-heavy school administrations. Representative Canfield indicated that consolidation may address some of that but that the legislators have not gotten that far yet. Curt Hier noted that Fair Haven's current district is under 1200 students currently. Roy Newton asked about rights-of-way on Route 22a; he wanted to know why the rights-of-way are not a top priority and why state representatives would not meet to discuss this. Representative Canfield said he would investigate this. John Brusco asked about guaranteed salaries of school administrations. Curt Hier replied that was correct, since salaries are part of a current year's budget.

**ARTICLE 1** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to hear the Town Officers' Report?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 2** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to approve the Selectboard's budget of **\$2,909,897** (minus **\$616,605** anticipated revenue) of which **\$2,293,292** is to be raised by taxes?

Bob Richards asked why the pilot program revenue is down. Town Manager Joe Gunter replied that the Town just bought the new DPW building. Gunter noted that the Select Board worked very hard to keep the budget down as much as possible; there was an uptick in police and first responder salaries, as well as for DPW salaries and town staff salaries. Jeff Sheldon asked about the transfer station

salaries. Gunter explained that a new union contract was completed and salary increases had to cover two years due to the timing of when the contract was signed. Police Chief William Humphries asked about moving some line items within DPW to more accurately reflect usage. Gunter agreed that money is more accurately accounted for when actual usage is taken into account. Gunter added that every appropriation is on the ballot, not in the budget. Bob Richards asked about the drop in \$10,000 in fuel and propane on page 11. Gunter indicated that MERP funds (no match needed) improved heating and insulation in the building, so he thinks there will be a savings here. Lillian Bilewicz asked about whether the water line near McDonald's and on Prospect Street was included in this budget; Gunter replied that those costs were covered by a bond. She also asked for the total loan for the new DPW building and the fire truck payment. Gunter said \$2.75 million for the DPW building and about \$600,000 for the fire truck payment. She also asked whether the town reserve account was affected by these loans. Gunter said it was not. Sean Galvin asked whether there was a plan to stop paying for the water bill for the trailer park near Airport Rd. Gunter said the state intervened to stop a shutdown. Gunter added that the residents of the trailer park missed the deadline to purchase the trailer park a few weeks ago and the park is now scheduled to be officially closed. Rod Holzworth asked for clarification on Article 23. Gunter noted that this item was not in the budget and has never been voted on before. He said it was a resident petition and didn't seem to fit with the rest of the appropriations. Glen Traverse added that the appropriations on page 16 would have to have this item added to that total if the Article were to pass. Mike Stannard wanted to clarify page 10 of the auditor's report; he asked whether trends with revenues and expenses are taken into account during the budgeting process. Gunter noted that revenues are reviewed by the Select Board, but that unexpected expenses (such as the water main break a few years ago) can alter these numbers in any given year. Bob Richards asked about the reappraisal in the reserve account and whether there is enough in the reserve account to cover that. Glen Traverse said one payment had been made so far and that it would need to be reviewed in six years. Curt Hier asked again about the trailer park and plans for redeveloping that property once it is shut down. Gunter said he could not speak for the current or a future Select Board, but that there are possible opportunities to develop that property down the line. Glenn Traverse added that the past due water bills at the trailer park are being tracked and that those liens will be collected. Lillian Bilewicz asked how the IRS lien would be handled when the trailer park is closed. Gunter indicated that the Town has first priority but that he could not speak for the IRS. Rod Holzworth asked about the West Haven transportation revenue on page 8. Town Accountant Teri Perry noted that they were late on a payment and the decrease was due to that. Holzworth also asked about the School Resource Officer pay. Chief Humphries noted that the line item covers the SRO salary and special services; revenue reflects this as well. Joe Donaldson asked who does the cleanup of the trailer park once it closes. Gunter replied that it would be a Select Board decision; Sam Lucci added that it would depend on negotiation with an interested developer of the property.

**ARTICLE 3** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to elect officers for the following terms: Town Moderator for one (1) year term; Second Constable for two (2) year term; two (2) Selectmen for one (1) year term; one (1) Selectmen for three (3) year term; one (1) Town Treasurer for three (3) year term; one (1) Lister for three (3) year term; one (1) Trustee of Public Funds for three (3) year term; one (1) Town Auditor for three (3) year term; one (1) Town Auditor for 2 years term remaining

of three (3) year term; one (1) Library Trustee for three (3) year term; one (1) Library Trustee for two (2) year term; one (1) Library Trustee for one (1) year term.

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 4** Advisory: Shall the Town of Fair Haven consider replacing the sidewalks from the Fair Haven Grade School to Liberty Street, including the sidewalk in front of Durfee's?

Ciel Hunt clarified that this article refers to the sidewalk in front of Durfee's store (not Durfee's Funeral Home). Rod Holzworth asked if this article passed, whether it would authorize the Select Board to spend money on this. Hunt said yes. He further asked whether this was the same article that was voted on a couple of years ago. Glen Traverse said yes and added that he was in favor of this project and asking the voters for their opinion.

**ARTICLE 5** Shall the voters establish a reserve fund to be called the **Option Tax Reserve fund** to be used for the maintenance and improvement of town infrastructure, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804 and to appropriate all local option tax revenue to be deposited into the reserve fund?

Glen Traverse said this article exists to house the funds that would be raised should Article 6 pass. Lillian Bilewicz asked whether this fund would have a separate line item. Gunter said the Board would use this money only for infrastructure projects. Sam Lucci added that the Select Board would have to vote on any use of money in the Reserve Fund.

**ARTICLE 6** To fund infrastructure projects, including sidewalk construction and repair, road and bridge improvements, water and sewer system improvements, and recreation facility improvements, shall the voters assess a one percent (1%) local option sales tax, a one percent (1%) local option meals and alcoholic beverages tax, and a one percent (1%) local option rooms tax pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138?

Joe Donaldson asked whether this would be allocated just for roads, or sidewalks, or to improve the park, or water and sewer lines; in other words, would it be used for only infrastructure. Glen Traverse referred Donaldson to the handout that outlines which infrastructure projects could be covered by this money. Gunter added that the Article is legally binding and that the Select Board cannot use these funds for anything other than infrastructure. Donaldson hoped the Select Board would make good decisions. Cindy Pritchard asked what the projected income of the 1% tax might be in the first year. Keith Hier said \$450,000-\$500,000. Hier added that this is 1% versus what would end up being 4-5% in increases in property or water taxes to pay for infrastructure and that he supported this Article. Pritchard asked for clarity on whether the 1% tax would be in addition to increased state or property taxes. Sam Lucci noted that adding projects to the budget would increase property taxes; the 1% tax would fund these projects by generating revenue instead of raising the budget and property taxes. She asked if property taxes would increase if this Article does not pass. Lucci said they may, if the need for infrastructure projects outstrip the amount raised by the 1% tax. Ivan Smith asked whether there is an expiration date on the 1% tax. Lucci said no, but that it could be repealed by adding it back on the ballot. Curt Hier asked about the state allowing gas to be taxed. Lucci said that would need to come before the voters as well and that it wouldn't be automatically included. Chadd Viger said it was not listed in what Fair Haven is voting on and that the Select Board would need to discuss it. Bob

Richards pointed out that if this Article does not pass, the Select Board will have a very difficult time keeping their yearly budget increases at inflation and that due to rising costs, this would be even more difficult; borrowing money for infrastructure emergencies is always at a higher cost. Rod Holzworth asked whether the tax would include cannabis dispensaries. Lucci and Gunter confirmed this. Gunter added that he and the Town Accountant researched towns of comparable size to get an idea of what revenue might be generated in Fair Haven. Mike Stannard commented that he felt there was an equality issue with this Article; he said there are residents who pay high taxes outside of town and that they might not be covered by these funds. Lillian Bilewicz asked about the projected revenue that might be raised by this tax; she agreed with someone who posted on Facebook that she thought those numbers were not realistic and that taxable sales would be closer to \$214,000. Dennis Reed pointed out that the person Bilewicz referenced admitted that she did not consider all relevant businesses in town, but only a subset, in her calculations. Rose Anne Van Lew noted that property taxes are going to go up, but asked what the Town might do to mitigate this; she said that even if only half of the projected revenue was raised, it would be significant; she added that the Select Board and the Town departments are executing responsible budgets and that no one else has provided a viable solution to this issue; she supports the tax. Anne Finley pointed out that the 1% option task is literally a penny on the dollar and that we are paying that tax in several towns in the surrounding area, including Rutland, Manchester, and Dorset; she supports the tax and says it's a no brainer because every little bit helps.

**ARTICLE 7** Shall the voters of Fair Haven raise and appropriate for the fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$50,000** for additional road paving?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 8** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for the fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$101,815** to support the *Fair Haven Free Library*?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 9** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for the fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$194,256** for the support of the *Fair Haven Rescue Squad*?

Rod Holzworth asked what the annual budget is for the Rescue Squad. Wendy Fitzgerald said \$992,801.24.

**ARTICLE 10** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for the fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$32,450** to support **Slate Valley Cares**, a program which organizes and coordinates services necessary to meet the needs of the citizens of the Town of Fair Haven?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 11** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$2,739** for the support of *Rutland Mental Health Services* so that these services can be maintained?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 12** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$3,000** to support the programs and services of ***BROC – Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?***

Sherrie Pomainville said this organization has assisted 22 households and 187 residents with services this past year.

**ARTICLE 13** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$1,200** to support ***RSVP and the Volunteer Center?***

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 14** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$7,087** for the support of the ***VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region*** formerly known as *Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice?*

Heidi Gillespie said this organization serves Fair Haven and is celebrating 80 years of service. She said they did 1,500 home visits in Fair Haven last year.

**ARTICLE 15** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$3,500** to support the ***ARC Rutland Area***, serving citizens with developmental disabilities?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 16** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$9,000** for the support of Castleton ***Community Seniors, Inc.*** (The Old Homestead) senior bus transportation and wellness programs?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 17** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$2,500** for the support of the ***Marble Valley Regional Transit District's*** (The Bus) public transit service to the residents of the Town?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 18** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$5,000** for the support of ***Fair Haven Boys & Girls Club*** to provide services to residents of the Town.

Sean Galvin asked whether there were any representatives present from this organization. There were not.

**ARTICLE 19** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$1,800** for ***Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging*** to provide elder services to residents of the Town?

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 20** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$800** to support the **Child First Advocacy Center** to provide services to residents of the Town?

Rose Anne Van Lew asked Chief Humphries to elaborate on this organization. Chief Humphries said the money helps support victims of sex trafficking and pay for experienced interviewers for those victims. Paul Jiardin asked whether this was already funded by the state. Sam Lucci said they might receive funding from the state but also require supplemental funding.

**ARTICLE 21** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$1,359** to support the **Regional Ambulance Service**?

Sean Galvin noted that this Article is not for Fair Haven's ambulance. He said if residents don't want their property taxes to go up, they should not vote yes on everything. Keith Hier asked why this continued to be on the ballot. Galvin said it went back many years to when there were few, if any, local EMTs or paramedics. Rod Holzworth said this Article showed up during COVID and that it cannot be taken off without a petition. John Bilewicz asked whether anyone had considered asking Rutland Regional for an accounting. Glen Traverse said Rutland Regional did 36 intercepts last year, according to the Town Report. Wendy Fitzgerald said this helps cover what does not get paid for; she said the number of intercepts requested by Fair Haven from Rutland Regional is very small.

**ARTICLE 22** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to appropriate for fiscal year 2026-27 the sum of **\$2,000** to support the **Rutland County Health Partners**?

Rose Anne Van Lew asked what this was. Ciel Hunt said this used to be called the Free Clinic.

**ARTICLE 23** Shall the voters of Fair Haven vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$525,000.00 to reclaim with 4 inches of asphalt (pave) approximately 1.8 miles from approximately 194 Scotch Hill Rd to approximately 1936 Scotch Hill Rd.

Don Howard asked whether this is the next section of Scotch Hill. Ciel Hunt said yes. Rod Holzworth asked whether this was just taxes, not bonds or grants. Gunter said yes; he added that this is what the Board has to deal with, deferred maintenance. Holzworth asked whether some of this could be paid for by the 1% tax, if that were to pass. Gunter said it would need to be voted on by the Board, but yes, it could be. Bob Richards said this would be about \$.25 on residents' taxes. Lillian Bilewicz asked whether there was any money in the roads and sidewalks account that could help cover this. Gunter said there is about \$135,000 in that account, unencumbered. Glen Traverse said the Select Board wanted to put more in the budget for paving, but that they wanted to spread the project out over two or three years. But if this Article passes, it could be done all in one year. He further clarified that this Article was by petition and that he did not support it. John Brusio commented that he hoped whoever does the contract for Scotch Hill would do a good job.

**ARTICLE 24** To transact any other business properly to be done at the annual Town meeting.

Curt Hier thanked Glen Traverse for his 7 years of service on the Select Board. Keith Hier thanked Ceil Hunt for her years of service as Town Moderator. Glen Traverse added that he would like to congratulate the bowling team for their recent championship win.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

The polling place for receiving Australian ballots under Article 1 through 23 will be open at 10:00 A.M. and remain open until 7:00 P.M. at the Fair Haven Post 49 Legion Building.



Chad Viger, Chair of Selectboard