

**MINUTES FROM TOWN & SCHOOL MEETINGS
WITH ELECTION RESULTS**

**TOWN OF WESTFIELD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING AND ANNUAL SCHOOL MEETING
MARCH 3, 2026**

The legal voters of the Town of Westfield and the legal voters of the Westfield Town School District are hereby notified and warned to meet (in-person) at the Westfield Community Center, 59 North Hill Road, on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 10:00 A.M. to transact the following business:

The meeting was called to order at 10am by Westfield School Board Chair Mary Gagne who began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

WESTFIELD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING:

Article 1: To elect a moderator for a term of one-year:

Loren Petzoldt nominated Pat Sagui. Pat noted that she is happy to accept the nomination but cannot perform the duties for the current town and school meeting this year. *Pat Sagui was elected by voice vote to be the school moderator for a term of one year (2027).*

Mary Gagne motioned to appoint Loren Petzoldt to moderate the school portion of the meeting. Andrew Emery seconded. Motion passed.

Mark Higley and Liz Amsden spoke.

Mark Higley noted some things that have happened at the State House. He discussed multiple tax changes. Schools began programs this year to limit cell phone use. With New Hampshire getting rid of inspection rules, Vermont lawmakers are now attempting to do a similar thing. There has been discussion on switching to every other year and getting the DMV to change the rules to look at safety issues only for inspections. He noted some bills that are trying to tie up Vermont's state and private lands including Act 181. He's working to get current use land included in the states attempts to get 50% of Vermont's land conserved.

Liz Amsden is running for Vermont Electric Cooperative Director. She recently moved to Vermont and loves the area. She was very involved in Los Angeles, where she is from, and she is looking for signatures to get her name on the ballot for director. She left her email, lizamsden@hotmail.com if anyone would like to email her.

Loren Petzoldt informed everyone of the rules of the meeting and asked them to put cell phones on silent mode. He requested everyone who would like to speak to raise their hand and be addressed prior to speaking.

Article 2. To elect one Westfield Town School District Board Member for a term of three years: **Carrie Glessner nominated Mary Gagne, Mike Jacobs seconded. Hearing no other nominations, Will Young motioned to instruct the clerk to cast one ballot for Mary Gagne and Connie LaPlume seconded. The motion passed by a voice vote.** *Mary Gagne was elected to a three-year term (2029).*

Article 3. To elect a Union School Board director for one year of a three-year term: **There were no nominations. The position remains vacant.**

Article 4. Shall the voters of the Westfield Town School District appropriate the sum of \$2,296,195 to defray the expenses and liabilities for the Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary School for the ensuing year with a net assessment to the town of \$976,421? **(Paper ballot to be commingled with Jay)**

Mike Piper motioned to bring Article 4 to the floor, Connie LaPlume seconded. Marc Olhoeft questioned the increase noted in the packet the school board provided. Mary Gagne clarified that the increase shown is for all the school budgets, not just the elementary school. He questioned why the increase is higher than the cost of living and inflation. Mary explained that initially they were looking at an increase of 12%, then when the state released more numbers, it was closer to 7.71%. The Governor then noted that the state would put 75 million dollars into the education fund and they are focused on reforming the way education taxes are collected to fix this problem in the future. She noted that the proposed elementary school budget would amount to an approximate increase of 3.47% to property taxes and with the Governors proposed buy down there would be approximately a \$133 increase in education taxes on a home appraised at \$200,000.

Kelli Dean is a school administrator in the Franklin Northeast area. She noted that the rising cost of healthcare is a cost that is negotiated at the state level and not the local level. There was a massive increase in healthcare this year and there has been discussion at the state level about pulling health care out of school budgets and tackling that in a different way. Mary noted that the healthcare budget line increased by 7.4%.

Andrew Emery explained the statewide adjustment for the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA), which helps towns with a low CLA, like Westfield. The CLA is used when calculating the education taxes for each town.

Hunter Couture, principal of Jay/Westfield Elementary School noted that there are many factors outside of the school boards control. The biggest impact to Westfield is the CLA. The Supervisory Union assessment as well as special education costs are also out of the local school boards control. He noted that they have an awesome school and they provide many great opportunities for kids.

Marc Olhoeft questioned administrative costs, which he noted increased by 10%. Those increases exceed cost of living and inflation rate increases. For the high school the increases are more than 10%. Loren Petzoldt noted that the high school budget is an Australian ballot article and questions about their budget should be discussed under that article. Marc questioned how many children are in the elementary school. Mary noted that there are 83 kids in grades pre-k through 6th. Marc noted that this budget is around \$27,000 per child. Andrew noted that there are adjustments due to rurality and poverty which brings the per pupil cost to \$14,653. The weighting is a statewide adjustment made for each school. The long-term weighted average daily membership for Westfield is higher than last year. Andrew also clarified the 10% increase Marc was referencing does not stand for administration costs, it is the average daily membership increase.

Mary commented on the school and noted that she has two kids in the school and there are great programs going on there. She explained that there are programs that identify specific areas where kids need targeted help and it is really helping kids with their academics.

Shelley Martin noted that the school is also helping socially. The kids come to the senior meal each year and create gifts for them and show that they value seniors.

Connie LaPlume noted that many people in town were around when the school was first built. She told a story about her grandson during his time at the elementary school. She noted that the kids really support each other.

Article 9 passed.

Marc Olhoeft questioned why they are moving this money. Mary Gagne noted that capital improvements are improvements to the school building, and she would assume they are using the money for things that may come up in the future.

- Article 10.** Shall the voters of the North Country Union Junior High School District approve the school board to expend \$7,169,400 which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The North Country Union Junior High School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$13,594, which is 1.58% higher than per pupil spending for the current year. **(Australian ballot)**

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes - 44 No - 27 Spoiled - 0 Blank - 0

Article 10 passed.

Marc Olhoeft noted that they also increased in the previous year.

- Article 11.** Shall the voters of the North Country Union Junior High School District approve the Board of School Directors to place \$250,000 of undesignated FY2025 fund balance from the general fund operations in the Building Maintenance Reserve fund? **(Australian ballot)**

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes - 48 No - 23 Spoiled - 0 Blank - 0

Article 11 passed.

As there was discussion on the Junior High and High School budgets, and Westfield does not currently have any representation on that school board Mary Gagne noted that if anyone is interested in that position they would appreciate the help.

- Article 12.** Shall the voters of the North Country Union Junior High School District approve the Board of School Directors to establish and place \$150,000 of undesignated FY2025 fund balance from the general fund operations in the Field of Dreams Reserve Fund? **(Australian ballot)**

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes - 42 No - 29 Spoiled - 0 Blank - 0

Article 12 passed.

Connie LaPlume questioned why all this undesignated money isn't rolled over to buy down the budget. Andrew Emery noted that sometimes it is, or part of it is. Marc Olhoeft pointed out that the board of education is asking for a 22% increase, the principal's office is asking for a 12% increase, nursing services is a 49% increase and special education programs have a 12.5% increase. Andrew noted that the board meetings for the high school and junior high school are open to the public and are where these questions would be better answered. Jessica Kennison explained a program that was questioned called Kingdom Course. LaDonna Dunn noted that the high school and junior high school hold informational meetings prior to town meeting and they are specifically for people to ask questions about the budgets being voted on.

- Article 13.** To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting. There was no discussion.

- Article 14.** To adjourn. Pauline Couture motioned to adjourn at 11:06AM; Shelley Martin seconded.

Motion passed by voice vote.

WESTFIELD TOWN ANNUAL MEETING:

Immediately following the School Meeting, the Town Meeting was called to order by Jacques Couture.

Article 1. To elect a moderator for a term of one-year.

Loren Petzoldt nominated Pat Sagui.

Pat Sagui was elected by voice vote to be the town moderator for a term of one year (2027).

Richard Degre motioned to appoint Loren Petzoldt to moderate the town portion of the meeting. Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.

Article 2. To hear the reports of the Town Officers: **Pat Sagui motioned, and Sue Scott seconded to bring Article 2 to the floor.**

Jacques Couture recognized Town Clerk LaDonna Dunn for her upcoming retirement after twelve and a half years as Town Clerk and three years as Assistant Town Clerk prior to that. The Selectboard is very grateful for her and all of the work she has done for the town. He also noted the 2025 town report received an award from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) as one of the best town reports for 2025.

Loren Petzoldt recognized some other people who have served the town in various positions for many years. These included Brian Dunn who has served on the Planning Commission for over 39 years, Danny Young who has been a Lister for 12 years, Mike Piper who has been a Constable for 22 years, Mike Jacobs who has been a Constable for 2 years, Jacques Couture who has been on the Selectboard for 47 years, Richard Degre who has been on the Selectboard for 34 years, Dennis Vincent who has been on the Selectboard for 3 years and Pat Sagui who has been Moderator for 32 years.

Article 3. To elect all necessary town officials required by law.

- a. 1st Constable - One-year term: **Mike Jacobs was nominated and he declined the nomination.** *Position remains vacant.*
- b. 2nd Constable - One-year term: **Dianne Laplante nominated Mike Piper. While Mike Piper was not at the meeting at that time it was noted that he would like to decline the nomination.** Jacques noted that constables follow up on unregistered dogs, and he feels it is one of the least thankful jobs anyone could have. He appreciates all the time the previous constables have put into the job. *Position remains vacant.*
- c. Library Trustee - Five-year term: **Carrie Glessner nominated Carolyn Lyster, Sue Scott seconded.** *Carolyn Lyster was elected by voice vote to a five-year term (2031).*
- d. Lister – One year of an unexpired three-year term: **Pat Sagui nominated Danny Young. Danny noted that his three-year term as lister is expiring this year and he is declining the one-year term.** No other nominations. *Position remains vacant.*
- e. Lister – Three-year term. **Shelley Martin nominated Danny Young.** Danny noted that he accepts the nomination for the three-year term. He noted however that he needs to get done being lister in the near future. He plans to help guide the town through the reappraisal and once it is done, around August of 2027, he would like to resign. He suggests in view of the lack of interest in filling the position that the

Selectboard hires an outside assessor. Shelley Martin noted that hiring an outside assessor can be very expensive.

Dianne Laplante asked if someone wanted to take the one-year lister position how they would learn the job. Danny explained that immersing yourself in the job and taking advantage of the trainings offered by the state and the software company that the town office uses is the best way to learn the job.

Rosemary Croizet questioned how many hours a week the job entails. Shelley Martin noted that it could average out to be around 3-5 hours a week, although there are times when they are busier.

Pat Sagui motioned for the clerk to cast one ballot for Danny Young, Shelley Martin seconded. *Danny Young was elected by voice vote to a three-year term (2029).*

- f. Selectperson - Three-year term: **Shelley Martin nominated Dennis Vincent. Sue Scott motioned to instruct the clerk to cast one ballot for Dennis Vincent; Maurice Doyon seconded. Motion passed by voice vote.** *Dennis Vincent was elected to a term of three years (2029).*

Article 4.

Shall the voters approve **\$32,143.50** for the following appropriations? **Connie LaPlume motioned and Yvan LaPlume seconded to bring Article 4 to the floor.**

Loren Petzoldt read through each appropriation and the following had discussions:

Jay Focus Group (f. \$250) – Sue Scott felt that they should get a higher appropriation amount and take the increase from the appropriation for the Pope Memorial Animal Shelter. It was noted that this would need to be two different motions and that the motion to remove funding from the animal shelter appropriation would need to be done when their appropriation is being discussed. **Sue Scott motioned to increase the amount to \$500 for the Jay Focus Group, Shelley Martin seconded. Motion to increase the appropriation amount for the Jay Focus Group to \$500 passed by voice vote.**

Orleans County Sheriff's Department (p. \$18,426.50) – Mike Jacobs compared the amount being requested to last year's appropriation and noted that it's a \$941 increase. He would like to not see them get the increase. He does not see them around town and other people in town have not seen them around either. **Mike Jacobs motioned to reduce the appropriation amount for the Orleans County Sheriff's Department to \$17,485. Shelley Martin seconded.** Mark English agrees with Mike's comments, and he felt that they could also get another \$250 off the amount to recoup what was increased for the Jay Focus Group. Connie LaPlume noted that the sheriff's office insurance rates went up also and she still wants someone to come if she calls for help. She noted that the hardware store in town was recently broken into. LaDonna pointed out how the sheriff's budget works. The town contracts for a certain number of hours and they calculate the appropriation based on their hourly rate. If the amount the town pays them decreases, then they just patrol the town for less hours. Marc Olhoeft noted that on page 58 of the town report there is a breakdown of what they did in town last year. **Motion to decrease the Orleans County Sheriff's Department appropriation amount to \$17,485 passed by voice vote.**

Marc Olhoeft questioned if other people in town want the sheriff to focus on traffic stops as that is mostly what they do. Mike Jacobs noted that traffic stops are important, especially to curb speeding. He would like to see more tickets given out rather than

warnings. Yvan LaPlume feels that warnings are just as bad as tickets. Marc Olhoeft would like to see them focus more on drug enforcement. Loren felt the discussion of what the sheriff's department should focus on would be better held at the end of the meeting.

Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter (r. \$500) – Sue Scott motioned to reduce the amount to \$250 to reflect the priority to support the Jay Focus Group, Jennifer Grace seconded. Connie LaPlume noted that they rely on donations and fundraisers and the state has cut funding to them. She feels they should get the full \$500 they requested. Shelley Martin felt that since cutting funding from the sheriff the amount should stay the same. Mark English felt the same. **Motion to reduce the appropriation amount to \$250 for the Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter failed by voice vote.**

Prevent Child Abuse Vermont (s. \$1,000) – Mike Jacobs noted this is a new appropriation. In reading the report he feels this is something that is already being done in schools now. He feels it's a large request for a first time ask of an appropriation. Jenn Stelma commented that they provide services to train mental health hotline workers and they do very important work. **Sue Scott motioned to decrease the amount to \$500, Shelley Martin seconded.** Kelli Dean commented that schools are seeing huge increases in mental health issues and child abuse. The schools rely heavily on resources like these. The schools cannot keep up at the level that is needed. LaDonna noted that the organization did reach out and requested to amend the appropriation amount to \$500, however they had missed the deadline. **Motion to reduce the appropriation amount for Prevent Child Abuse Vermont to \$500 passed by voice vote.**

Troy and Area Lions Club (u. \$500) – Connie LaPlume noted that she is at the senior meal site every week and it takes many people to keep the meal site running. They are looking for volunteers to help set up tables, help with takeout, meal prep and cleanup. Even an hour once a month would help. She noted that Denny Lyster does a great job running the meal site and that Berry Creek Farm is also a huge help with providing food. Marc Olhoeft noted that the meal site is the center of a lot of activity in town and it is very helpful for the seniors in town who are on a fixed income. Dennis Vincent questioned where the appropriation money gets spent. Connie noted that it is 100% used for food purchases. Dennis Vincent would like to increase the appropriation and Connie noted that Denny Lyster would not like the amount increased as he only likes to request the amount they need to operate on. Richard Degre thanked everyone who helps out with the meal site.

The amended amount of all the appropriations came to \$30,952.50.

Article 4 amended amount of \$30,952.50 passed by voice vote.

Article 5. Shall the voters approve general government fund expenditures of \$484,085.59 of which \$170,385.59 shall be raised by non-tax revenues and \$313,700 shall be raised by municipal taxes? *This amount does not include Appropriations in Article 4.* **Pat Sagui motioned to bring Article 5 to the floor and Connie LaPlume seconded.**

Jennifer Grace noted that in light of the economy the increase is a lot. Jacques Couture explained that the Selectboard members are also taxpayers and they take the budget line by line and do the best they can. The health insurance increases in the state have also affected the town employees and the board feels it's worth paying for these benefits to keep the staff the town has. Marc Olhoeft questioned the reappraisal expenses. Jacques noted that the reappraisal will begin this year and payments for this will begin being due. Danny Young noted that the state requires when a reappraisal needs to be done. He noted that starting in 2027 every town will need to be reappraised every 6 years. Richard Degre noted that the town gets \$4,000 a year from the state to go towards a reappraisal

and that money is put away until a reappraisal takes place, so some of the money shown in the budget was already raised and is only being expended this year.

Article 5 passed by a voice vote.

- Article 6.** Shall the voters approve highway fund expenditures of \$578,078.02, of which \$82,400 shall be raised by non-tax revenues and \$495,678.02 shall be raised by municipal taxes? *The \$495,678.02 includes repayment of the 2025 highway fund deficit of \$67,932.02.* **Shelley Martin motioned to bring Article 6 to the floor and Pauline Couture seconded.**

Dianne Laplante questioned what the Wild and Scenic grant covers. Jacques Couture noted that federal money comes to the Wild and Scenic committee each year and the town has been receiving grant funds from the committee in the amount of \$10,000 a year to replace culverts that are near the Missisquoi River. Marc Olhoeft noted that Eric Kennison does a good job keeping the road maintenance fees down and if the town had to purchase equipment it would be drastically higher.

Article 6 passed by a voice vote.

- Article 7.** Shall the voters authorize the Town Treasurer, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. §4791, to collect current taxes? **Pat Sagui motioned to approve Article 7 and Will Young seconded.**

Article 7 passed by a voice vote.

- Article 8.** Shall the voters authorize payment of real property taxes before 4 p.m. on the first Thursday each October, by physical or electronic delivery to the Town Treasurer? *Postmarks are not accepted.* **Pat Sagui motioned to approve Article 8 and Pauline Couture seconded.** *Article 8 passed by a voice vote.*

- Article 9.** To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting.

Carrie Glessner spoke about the broadband internet company, NEKCV. She noted that service is now available to most areas in town. There is grant money for free installation to homes if they have underground power rather than aerial lines. The grant money runs out soon though. If service is not available at your home yet, you should still sign up as it brings priority to the area the more people sign up. Shelley Martin questioned if they provide phone and television service and Carrie noted they provide phone service.

Carrie also noted that the library just had a huge renovation of the youth room as well as other changes to the building through the Municipal Energy Resilience Grant (MERP).

Marc Olhoeft questioned if the internet service has a discount for seniors and Carrie noted it does not, but it does for low-income households.

LaDonna Dunn explained the E911 sign program. Roger Gosselin, the towns E911 Coordinator, brought the idea to the Selectboard. The signs go on a mailbox, tree, side of your home, etc. and they will be made at the town office. They are reflective signs with the homes 911 number on them, and it makes it much easier for emergency services to find a home. If interested people can fill out the order form and then pick up completed signs up at the Town Office.

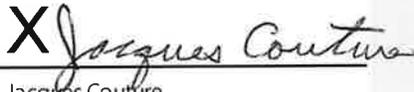
Karen Blais noted that she had her house number painted on her mailbox and the ambulance still drove past her house four times when she called one night, so she purchased one of these reflective signs after that happened.

Connie LaPlume questioned when LaDonna Dunn will be retiring and she noted that she will be at the end of March. Her term will not yet be up, and she is hoping the Selectboard will appoint Niki Dunn as her replacement for the last year of her term.

Heather Johnson noted that she has flyers from the Jay Focus Group to pass out about a fundraiser they are holding.

Danny Young noted that some towns in southern Vermont have an article on their town meeting warning to push the state to move to a universal healthcare system. He feels the healthcare costs should not be included in the school budgets and he feels each person can make some effort to move this forward. Marc Olhoeft questioned if there should be an advisory vote to let the Selectboard know the town would support action towards universal healthcare. Shelley Martin felt the town's website should say that the town supports universal healthcare. Marc Olhoeft's request of an advisory vote to let the Selectboard know the town would support a push towards universal healthcare passed by a voice vote. This is an advisory vote only, and non-binding.

Article 10. To adjourn. **Connie LaPlume motioned to adjourn at 12:20PM and Sue Scott seconded. *Passed by a voice vote.***

X 

Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X 

Mary Gagne
Westfield School Board Chair

X 

Loren Petzoldt
Moderator