

TOWN OF TUNBRIGE

2026 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, 10:00 am

Meeting called to order at 10:02 am

Moderator Provoncha led the town in the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator Provoncha gives some background on Town Meeting and Robert's Rules.

140 voters present.

Art 1: To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.

Selectboard Chair Gary Mullen opens the floor to nominations for Moderator. Nominations for Israel Provoncha by Rob Howe. Seconded. All aye. So moved.

Art 2: To hear the reports of Town Officers

Moved by Victoria Paquin. Seconded by Becky Hoyt.

Collector of Delinquent Taxes Joe Paquin

Report found on Page 41. Paquin brought a sheet with delinquent properties. Properties highlighted in yellow are available for tax sale. We have \$223,952 of that \$107,000 is eligible for tax sale. \$29,000 are making payment plans and \$87,000 is not eligible for tax sale. Properties must be delinquent for two years to be eligible for tax sale and have more than \$1500 in principal due.

Auditors Betsy Race, Anissa Morrison & Linda Hoyt

Betsy Race and Linda Hoyt give the update. The auditors reconcile the checkbook every month with the help of the treasurer. They also reconcile the funds for the annual year. These funds can be found on pages 24-33. Laura Ginsburg looks at the school overpayment line in the Fund Report. Treasurer Hoyt updates that after the cash flow has been reconciled by the state the school sometimes owes us money which goes back as surplus for the General Fund.

Library Mariah Raynes

Raynes tells a story about going to the DMV yesterday and how being a public librarian was able to solve the problem for a man at the DMV. The library is a place that all can go, for band practice, Revolutionary War Camps, homework help etc. Raynes wants to thank the Friends of the Library for all that they do.

Listers Dan Ruddell, Deb Mullen & Christine Battcock

Dan "Rudi" Ruddell discusses that the report which can be found on page 38. Ruddell thanks both Mullen and Battcock for all of their help. More town are questioning if they are going to keep elected listers or if they are going to have hired assessors. More pressure is being put on the listers regarding on-going education new this year. Anna Dechart asks about the CLA. The state

annually goes through a sales equalization study where they look at the sales from the past three years and relate it to how the town has things assessed, which is a large discrepancy. The CLA that the listers use uses cost tables where the Towns properties are assessed against which date back to 2010. So this shows the discrepancy about the CLA in the Town Report versus the School Report. Rob Howe asks about the CLA and how it affects the tax rate. The Equalization Study is supposed to level between towns. The Coalition of Dispersion (COD) is the equity within town. The Town to Town level tries to help everyone pay the equivalent of the schools education tax. The education base rate is divided by our CLA. Mary Rose asks if the reason the CLA is staying low is because there are not enough people to help do the updated assessment. Ruddell states that the assessors are contracted several years out right now. We are contracting for this next round of assessments. Our contract is now for field work in 2028 and completed in 2030.

Cemetery Commission- Baxter Doty, Dennis Cilley & Ben Tucker

Baxter Doty thanks the people who mow the private cemeteries and those who worked in Hutchinson Cemetery last fall. There will be a bid in the papers for the cemetery mowing for the next three year cycle. Moving forward each year the Cemetery Commission will pick a cemetery to work on and help fix the stones and cut the brush. This coming year is the Hunt Cemetery.

Planning Commission

Ruddell gives update on what the Planning Commission has been up to. Due to the ongoing issues with the speed in Town the Selectboard helped facilitate the installation of the speed signs north and south of the village. The Planning Commission is working on their Hazard Mitigation Plan and will be holding an open meeting for the public to discuss what people are interested in

Bill Tarkalich asks what happened to the cell phone tower on Monarch Hill. Ruddell states that the application that was submitted by Vertex had a window it needed to be completed in and that has expired and they have not resubmitted their application.

Currently the Planning Commission is not at full capacity. Ruddell states if you are interested in a certain commission or committee, he urges you to attend and see if that is a good fit for you to join.

Recreation-Kathy Galluzzo

Recreation has been holding their monthly breakfasts, improvements to the pool lined up for this summer and continues with their baseball, softball on the ball field and ice-skating rink.

Selectboard- John O'Brien, Gary Mullen, & Mike McPhetres

John O'Brien introduces the Selectboard. The report can be found on page 7-8. O'Brien briefs over the report they submitted. O'Brien suggests reading through the budget and raising questions if you see anything you have questions on or would like to change, please let them know. In five years we are planning an expansion or create a new building. This year we are looking at a sticker system, and the rates will increase a small amount. We are sticking with

Windsor County Sheriffs department because they have been doing well. The Town Offices and Town Hall will be getting updated and weatherized which will help us save money. We need to order a new dump truck which is about a ¼ of a million dollars. We need to think two years out to order a truck. We are looking for two new EC Fiber representatives, so if anyone is interested please let us know!

Gary Mullen discusses the highway fund and the new town garage. We are looking at a separate building to store all of the equipment in. We have put in a solar array which has cut our power bill in about half. We are using new material on our dirt roads for mud season- it costs more money to get here, but we are hoping in the long run it will help decrease the number of mud seasons we have.

Zug asks which roads got this new material? Dickerman got some, Spring Road, Monarch Road and a few others. We are doing a mile here and a mile there of the worst dirt roads.

Rick Barnaby states that if you want to see what the difference is in the new material, go drive on the Spring Road and then drive on the Town Farm Road.

Rob Howe asks if the Road Commissioner is getting done this year? Mullen states he does not know. Howe asks that we give a hand for the road crew.

Joe Paquin asks if this road material is great, how much will it cost to update the remaining roads and how much is left. Mullen states until mud season is over to see how it worked out, and then if it holds up as good as they hope, we will move forward with more.

Mike O'Donnell would like to clarify that we have not had a road commissioner in many years (Nancy Howe states Ed Howe was the last) and we now have a Road Foreman.

Victoria Paquin asks about the Sheriff contract and if the Sheriff himself gets a percentage.

Joe Paquin then asks

Treasurer- Rebecca Hoyt

Hoyts report on page 22. Questions that were brought up at Pre-Town Meeting were: How much money is in the highway capital fund currently is \$239,720.57. How much did we spend on the lawsuit and our lawyers which was \$66,553.90 over the course of five or so years. How much is split between the two ambulance contracts: \$41,190 South Royalton and \$36,754 for First Branch. Laura Ginsburg asks about the revenue that we are missing from lost taxes; what does the town do to make this difference? Hoyt states that what is collected in current taxes is what is in the budget next. The collection of delinquent taxes each year helps, but we just project the best that we can. The last budget to get paid is the highway budget and the appropriations and then the general fund gets the money that's leftover. Ginsburg asks if there has ever been a time when we go to get a dump truck and the tax money doesn't come in and we need to take a bridge loan? Hoyt states that no, we have reserve funds so that we don't have to have loans. We are a debt free town.

Rick Barnaby asks between the General Fund and the Highway Fund, do we borrow money from fund to fund and then replace it? Hoyt states no, that we are not allowed to spend money set aside for the Highway Fund to use for the General Fund.

Betsy Race states that when she started there were loans out, but that this Town has been amazing at planning what we need or what we want to do so that we can make purchases debt free.

Trustees of Public Funds- Laura Ginsburg, Liz York, Matt Frost

Liz York and Laura Ginsburg discuss their report on page 44. These numbers are about 8 months behind the current market. York thanks Rob Howe for his many years of service and welcomes Laura as the newest trustee. Joe Paquin what our current risk profile is since we are up right now. York states that we are conservative. We are balanced. It is a split between stocks and bonds.

Town Nurse- Jodi Hoyt

Hoyt gives an update of her report on page 43. She has 42 regular clients who she sees on a monthly visits. She has significantly more clients this year and has been very busy. They have created a Community Nurse Board to help with outreach. She held a vaccination clinic this year and vaccinated 47 people. The Board is looking into future funding to help expand the program.

Jen Hayslett wants to express her gratitude to Jodi Hoyt and the community that we can make this happen.

Conservation Commission- Eliza Minnucci

The Conservation Commission has 9 active members, but they anticipate an opening in August. Currently they are doing a survey about what birds are in Tunbridge. Currently there have been 40. There will be a program with VINS in May. Green Up Day is coming in May as well.

Theresa Fitzgerald asks how we can register for the VINS program. There will be a link on Facebook, Instagram and the Town Website or you can email the Conservation Commission.

All aye. Motion carried.

Art 3: Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on Monday, November 2nd, 2026, by delivery to the town hall postmarked on or before that date, with delinquent taxes having an interest charge of 1% per month or fraction thereof for the first 3 months and then 1.5% each month pursuant 32 V.S.A. § 5136, to thereafter and an 8% penalty charged against them from the due date?

Roberta Bicknell moves to accept. Seconded. All aye. So moved.

Art 4: Shall the voters authorize Town Treasurer, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4791 to collect current taxes?

Joe Paquoin moves to accept. Nancy Howe seconds. All aye. So moved.

Art 5: Shall the voters authorize the Town to create a Planning Fund?

Nancy Howe moves. Seconded by Rudi Ruddell. Gary Mullen explains that this fund is to help fund the updating of the Town Plan and the Hazard Mitigation Plan we need to do every 5-7 years. Jean Palthay asks if this fund is being created this year or being funded this year. Mullen states it is being created this year and funded next year. Todd Tyson asks if we would still be using Two Rivers moving forward; Mullen states that yes, we are planning on it. Jonathan Bicknell asks about “undesignated funds” under the reserve funds and what that is. Treasurer Hoyts states this was started before her time when there was a tax deficit, and this fund was historically created to have as a buffer if we were negative. All aye. So moved.

Art 6: Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$924,977 of which \$510,627 shall be raised by taxes?

Rob Howe moves. Seconded by Nancy Howe. Tess Mix asks if we can help fund childcare for Town Meeting childcare, so that parents can be more active in this town meeting. Mariah Raynes states that previously it has been done by teenagers, but the missing piece is an adult watching the teenagers watching the kids. All aye. So moved.

Art 7: Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of \$1,313,318 of which \$1,163,968 shall be raised by taxes?

Nancy Howe moves. Seconded by Joe Paquin. All aye. So moved.

Art 8: Shall the town vote to appropriate \$66,000 to support the Tunbridge Volunteer Fire Department?

Nancy Howe moves. Joe Paquin seconds. Joe Paquin thanks Becky Hoyt for taking over the book keeping for the Fire Department. Maureen Moriarity wants to thank the Fire Department for all they do. All aye. So moved.

Art 9: Shall the Town appropriate \$20,905 to support the following social service pursuant to 24 V.S.A ~ 2691.

Joe Paquin moves. Nancy Howe seconds. James McGuire states that last year we made a motion to increase Safeline from \$750 to \$1000. Seconded by Victoria Paquin. Lenora Kimball tells the community what Safeline does. All aye to change the article as amended. The total town appropriation is \$21,155. All aye. So moved.

Art 10: To see if the Town will vote to give the Tunbridge Volunteer Fire Department, the Tunbridge Historical Society and the Tunbridge Church a 100% or some other amount of property tax exemption for a five year period?

Roberta Bicknell moves. Seconded by Becky Hoyt. Ted Hoyt would like to amend to add the Tunbridge Grange. Nancy Howe asks that the Tunbridge Church be struck from the article and the Tunbridge Grange be added. All aye. So moved.

Art 11: To elect all Town Officers as required by law

Selectboard for a term of 3 years: Mike McPhetres

Lister for a term of 3 years: Christine Battcock

Lister for a term of 2 years:

Auditor for a term of 3 years: Linda Hoyt

Cemetery Commission for a term of 3 years: Dennis Cilley

Trustee of Public Funds for a term of 3 years: Matt Frost

Library Trustee for a term of 3 years: Elise Gabriel

Library Trustee for a term of 3 years: Liz Williams

Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a term of 1 year: Joseph Paquin

First Constable for a term of 1 year: Roger Clark

Second Constable for a term of 1 year: Mike O'Donnell

Town Grand Juror for a term of 1 year: Lenora Kimball

All nominations are motioned for acceptance. Seconded. All aye. So moved.

Art 12: Other Business

Caroline Gordon discusses the "Right to Grow Food." Gordon reads the resolution and requests a nonbinding straw vote. All aye.

David and Elizabeth Bicknell thank Baxter Doty for mentioning the Hunt Cemetery and their restoration that will be taking place.

Peter Klink proposes that we go back to pre-covid voting and citizenship and requests a straw poll. The nays have it.

John O'Brien discusses Legal Trails and how we asked if we could go after the Echeverias for the money we lost in legal fees. The attorney said we could, but they don't technically it.

O'Brien states the Selectboard may ask again, but we may not be able to claw back any of that money. Aileen Lem states that it has to do with the type of suit that it is. Todd Tyson thinks we should try and see if we can. O'Brien gives us a Legislative Update.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:36pm.