

STARKSBORO ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

February 28, 2026

**Town Meeting started at 9:09am with the introduction of Robert's Rules and pledge of allegiance.**

128 total registered voters, 14 new 1<sup>st</sup> timers for Town Meeting received locally grown maple syrup from our sugar makers.

Representatives Ruth Hardy, Karen Leuders & Herb Olson attended the meeting and spoke to their respective committees & policies they are currently working on. Andy Weis spoke about Robinson School and the student's growth, population & teachers' dedication. Beth Hahr will be retiring at the end of this school year. Congratulations Beth!

**Article 1: To be voted by Australian Ballot on March 3, 2026.** To elect Town Officers and Mount Abraham Unified School District Officers for the ensuing terms:

**Kristen Toy made a motion to bring Article 1 to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rob Liotard – no action taken – vote on Tuesday March 3, 2026**

Moderator, 1 year	Planning Commission, 3 years
Selectperson, 2 years remaining of a 3-year term	Library Trustee, 2 years remaining of a 3-year term
Selectperson, 2 years	Library Trustee, 3 years
Selectperson, 3 years	Library Trustee, 3 years
Cemetery Commissioner, 3 years	First Constable, 1 year
Auditor, 2 years remaining of a 3-year term	Second Constable, 1 year
Auditor, 3 years	Lister, 3 years
Delinquent Tax Collector, 1 year	Mount Abraham Unified School Director, 3 years

**Article 2: Shall the voters of the town accept the Auditors' Report for the year ending June 30, 2025?** Ben Campbell made a motion to bring the article to the floor 2<sup>nd</sup> by Erin Buckwalters - no discussion

**Voice Vote called – Article 2 passed**

**Article 3: Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize total fund expenditures of \$1,371,119 of which \$1,071,257 shall be raised by taxes and \$299,862 by non-property tax revenues?** Jeff Dunham made a motion to bring the article to the floor 2<sup>nd</sup> by Susanna Weller

Koran Cousino stated the \$113,000 increase is partially due to \$80,000 to the Jerusalem School House Bond .

Eric Hanson questioned the non-property tax revenue – where does this come from?

Koran Cousino stated the non-property tax funds come from the pilot program, recording fees and any town paid fees other than taxes

Dan Nugent questioned if the non-property tax money isn't raised, does this increase our taxes.

Koran replied not this year, but potentially could the following year

**Voice Vote Called – Article 3 passes**

**Article 4: Shall the voters of the town vote the following sum of money for the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund, being \$73,781?** Norm Cota made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Erin Bent – no discussion.

**Voice Vote Called – Article 4 passes**

**Article 5: Shall the voters of the town vote the following sum of money for the Road Equipment Reserve Fund, being \$134,095?** Cheryl Estey made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Susan Jefferies – no discussion  
**Voice Vote Called – Article 5 passes**

**Article 6: Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro approve the use of \$35,000 from the Unassigned General Fund Balance to assist in repairs and maintenance of town buildings in FY 26-27?** Mary O'Brien made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lisa Daudon

Lisa Daudon question when the front of the library will be fixed and if that is part of the Town's emergency funds. Koran Cousino stated these funds were being allocated to painting the library & town office and the library trustees are addressing the needs to the entrance of the library.

Katie Antos-Ketcham stated they have applied for grants for the improvement of the front entrance of the library in the amount of \$25,000

**Voice Vote Called – Article 6 passes**

If there is no objection, we are going to reverse the order of consideration for Article 7 and Article 8. We will be doing Article 8 first then Article 7. No objection made. Moving on to Article 8

**Article 8: Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize the transfer of \$109,001.50 from the Unassigned General Fund Balance to the Highway Fund?**  
Dennis Casey made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Luke McCarthy

Koran Cousino stated we are asking for the same amount in article 7 & 8 which is surplus money to be assigned to be put into the emergency reserve and to pay down the highway deficit. Since the January 28 warning and today we received news of an unexpected cost of the new sprinkler system for the Fire Station #2 located on Jerusalem Rd that has been required by the State. The sprinkler system was not required before – but with new changes this has changed and is now required. Apprx \$187,000 for this change. Hoping to have an amendment for article 8 to be reduced by \$100,00 to \$9001.50 and Article 7 would be increased by \$100,000 to \$209,001.50. By using this method, it gives the SB the authority use the money toward the sprinkler system.

Lisa Daudon asked what the emergency fund is.

Koran stated the emergency reserve fund is meant to cover unanticipated expenses, such as road equipment repair, building maintenance, natural disasters that affect our town.

Kir Talmage – What is the impact on the Highway Dept line.

Koran stated we have been carrying a deficit on the highway fund for a few years-which is not uncommon.

Robert Turner asked for someone to speak to the unassigned funds and where the amount comes from  
Ali Thompson stated it's a surplus over the years that has been growing, and possibly grants and outside revenues, and most of it has been spent.

Alan Quittner asked if the emergency fund is available to the Selectboard as needed?

Koran stated it is at the discretion of the Selectboard.

Jake Bent asked if we don't use the funds for the sprinkler system, what do we do with it then put it back in the Highway fund?

Koran stated yes but not this year.

Amendment made by Koran Cousino Change Article 8 to transfer \$9001.50 from the unassigned general fund balance to the highway fund reducing the article by \$100,000. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kirsten Talmage.

**Article 8 has been amended to:**  
**Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize the transfer of \$9001.50 from the unassigned general fund balance to the highway fund?**

No discussion

**Voice Vote Called – article 8 passed**

**Article 7 : Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize the transfer of \$109,001.50 from the Unassigned General Fund Balance to the Emergency Fund?**

Koran Cousino made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Eric Hanson

**Amended Article 7 : Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize the transfer of \$209,001.50 from the Unassigned General Fund Balance to the Emergency Fund?**

Koran Cousino made a motion to bring to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ross Schacher

What is the waiver process and how will it affect the project. The waiver was denied and they were able to reduce the amount for the sprinkler system down to \$187,00. The amount of \$100,000 from article 8 is in hopes to cover the sprinkler system

**Voice Vote Called – Article 7 passes**

**Article 9: Shall the voters of the town vote the following sum of money for the Starksboro Public Library to fund the costs of its operations for FY 26-27, being \$64,115.58?**

Jan McCleery made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Carter Antos-Ketcham

Katie Antos-Ketcham thanked the library trustees Emily Fisher, Leah Hamilton, Ellen Yount, Christa Finnern for the hard work they do. Encouraged everyone to use the space for meet & greets, meetings area & using the resources presented. The Lift has been completed and are applying for additional grants to get the upstairs up to code before the public can use it.

**Voice Vote called – Article 9 passes**

**Article 10: Shall the Town of Starksboro appropriate the sum of \$1,500 to the Bristol 4th of July Committee to help fund its annual Independence Day celebration and parade?**

Norm Cota made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kristen Toy

**Voice Vote called – Article 10 passes -no discussion**

**Article 11: In light of actions taken by the Board of the Mount Abraham Unified School District (MAUSD) potentially to close Robinson Elementary School, shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize the community to determine and then inform voters of the steps required (which would include a future vote by the Town's voters) to withdraw from MAUSD as provided in 16 V.S.A §724.**

Herb Olson made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rob Liotard

Kir Talmage asked who the “community” and “voters” are in this article.

Nancy Cornell spoke to the article: **Since August, 2025**, the MAUSD Administration and Board have been exploring what they call "education delivery options". They are currently exploring 3 options, two of which involve **closing 2 elementary schools**. The elementary schools most at risk of closure are Beeman, in New Haven, and Starkboro's Robinson School. **The superintendent and many members of the MAUSD Board seem to believe that the only way to control costs while maintaining quality programming for students is further consolidation and school closings. Starksboro's elected members on the MAUSD Board - Brad Johnson, Kristen Toy, and Herb Olson, have repeatedly voiced the position that:**

- the **financial challenges** we face are **systemic** and rooted in a dysfunctional approach to school financing (i.e. **property-based revenue streams**; and the rising **cost of health insurance statewide**); and
- data indicates that **closing schools does not assure savings, nor does it necessarily lead to improved student performance.**

- Brad and Herb and Kristen have tried to convince the administration and board that there are **MANY better ways to address financial and program challenges** that would not require closing schools.
- **The board has NOT yet decided** to recommend closing Robinson School, but the school closure approach seems to be gaining momentum.

An amendment was made to the article to Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro authorize the Save our Schools Committee to determine and then inform the voters of the next section of priority should include a future vote by the Town's voters to withdraw from MAUSD provided in 16 V.S.A §724? Voice Vote Called – Article 11 denied and reverts to the original article in the warning.

Jeff Dunham stated demographics play a part in the closure or opening of the school. In 10/20 yrs we could be back with an over abundance of kids for the system.

Nancy Carroll asked if the SOS committee is being proactive with steps to secure the school.

Nancy Cornell said that the process is complicated and they are actively waiting on information from MAUSD and the State to see what transpires from their meetings. If the MAUSD recommends the closure it would be voted on in November 2026.

Alan Quittner stated more residents need to attend the MAUSD meetings to be informed and so the MAUSD Board knows we are actively listening and being involved.

**Voice Vote Called – Article 11 passes**

**Article 12: Shall the registered voters of the Town of Starksboro vote at a special or regular meeting to adopt proposed amendments to the Town Plan or Zoning By-Laws by Australian Ballot in lieu of the Selectboard per 24 V.S.A. §4385(c)?**

Jan McCleery made the motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Baker

Discussion on different ways to amend the article from adding the State Statue to “and” versus’ s “or” to postponing the article for an Australian ballot in the future. After several amendments the following was approved to use.

Amended on the floor to read as follows.

**Amended Article 12: Shall the registered voters of the Town of Starksboro vote at a special or regular meeting to adopt proposed amendments to the Town Plan by Australian Ballot in lieu of Selectboard per 24 V.S.A §4385( c ) and if the State allows, vote Zoning By-Laws by Australian Ballot in lieu of the Selectboard per 24 V.S.A §4442( c)?**

**Standing Count for Article 12 - Passed 54 yes – 36 no**

**Article 13: Shall the voters of the Town of Starksboro vote to extend the office of Delinquent Tax Collector from a 1-year term to a 3-year term beginning in 2027?** Laurie Webber made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Susanna Weller.

Nancy Cornell questioned the change

Amy McCormick stated it's simply so the delinquent tax collector isn't on the ballot every year. No change in duties or statues

**Voice Vote called – article 13 passes**

**Article 14: Shall the voters of Starksboro appropriate a total of 109,357 to the**

**following social service agencies, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2691?**

Dennis Casey made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> by  
Lisa Daudon

AC Home Health & Hospice	,\$1,964.00
AC Parent/Child Center	\$1,600.00
AC Readers	\$350.00
Addison Co. Restorative Justice	\$800.00
Age Well	\$2,500.00
American Red Cross	\$500.00
Atria Collective (formerly Women Safe)	\$1,250.00
Bristol Family Center	\$500.00
Bristol Have a Heart Food Shelf	\$700.00
Bristol, Recreation Dept.	\$2,500.00
Bristol Rescue Squad	\$13,520.00
Counseling Service of Addison County	\$2,200.00
Elderly Services, Inc	\$900.00
Green Mount Cemetery	\$5,000.00
Green Up Vermont	\$100.00
Homeward Bound	\$500.00
HOPE	\$1,750.00
John W. Graham Emergency Shelter Services, Inc	\$970.00
Lewis Creek Assoc.	\$550.00
Open Door Clinic	\$250.00
Project READ	\$3,000.00
Richmond Rescue	\$6,077.00
Robinson Mentoring Program	\$2,000.00
RSVP/Green Mtn Foster Grandparent Program	\$370.00
Starksboro Cooperative Preschool	\$6,000.00
Starksboro Food Shelf	\$5,000.00
Starksboro Four Winds Nature Program	\$1,200.00
Starksboro Rescue Squad	\$12,000.00
Starksboro Sports Program	\$3,500.00
Starksboro Village Meeting House	\$3,000.00
Starksboro Volunteer Fire Department	\$24,000.00
Tri Valley Transit (formerly ACTR)	\$2,106.00
Turning Point Center	\$1,000.00
Vermont Adult Learning	\$700.00
Vermont Assoc. for the Blind & Visually Impaired	\$500.00
Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$250.00
Vermont Family Network	\$250.00
<b>TOTAL REQUESTS</b>	<b>\$ <u>109,357.00</u></b>

Rob Liotard spoke about the mentoring program and its rewards for the children.

Lisa Daudon spoke to the preschool renovations and its completion. Also noted the Food Shelf increase in needs to local families.

Eric Hanson spoke to the rescue squad and the importance of having them readily available to assist in any manner.

Tom Estey requested an amendment on the article to the Starksboro Vol. Fire Dept, an increase from \$24,000 to \$42,000 due to the increase in expense of outfitting fire dept members and equipment.

**Voice Vote Called on Amended article 14 – new total \$127,357  
article 14 passes**

**Article 15: Shall the voters of the town vote on the Real Estate taxes to be paid, without discount, to the Treasurer on or before Tuesday, October 15, 2026, before 4:30pm after becoming delinquent? Real Estate taxes must be received by this time; postmarks are not considered receipt.** Ben Campbell made a motion to bring the article to the floor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kristen Toy – no discussion

**Voice Vote Called – article 15 passed**

#### **Article 16: Discussion of other nonbinding business**

Tom Estey gave Thanks to the community for their support, and the new truck arrived in June and started its service in July. Please welcome our newest member Carter Antos-Ketcham. He also stated they have entered a program to be able to give out smoke & CO2 detectors to residents who can't afford them.

David Rousseau spoke to his running for a Selectboard seat

Sherry Pachman spoke about the resolution - Resolution that opposes the ice and customs and border patrol activities in Williston and throughout VT, was discussed and a straw poll was taken for the SB to take it under advisement.

Rich Warren made a motion for the resolution, Dan Baker 2<sup>nd</sup>

Dan Baker gave a thank you to Elsa Gilbertson for her work on the Town Report.

Lisa Daudon spoke about Chris Runcie and her amazing accomplishments and her commitment to the community.

Cecilia Elwert discussed the VOCA membership and its organization to help towns with their old cemeteries in keeping them maintained and the headstones cleaned.

Rich Warren wanted to extend a Thank you to Cathy Townsend for her services as the Town Library

Dan Kuzio spoke about a Grant the Planning Commission received for more affordable housing issue and will be working with Robert Turner on this.

Sherry Pachman made a motion to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rob Liotard. Town Meeting adjourned at 1:41pm.