

TOWN OF LANDGROVE

Annual Town Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2025

Call to order at 6:07 PM

Steve Hall opened the meeting with thanks for joining us on such an icy evening, it's great to see people here to see what we do. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Claudia Harris. Chrystal Cleary read the voter checklist, attendance was **32** voters.

- **Article 1: To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.** Sally Waite nominated Claudia Harris, who was approved unanimously by the voters. Claudia announced procedures, some guests and invited new voters and residents to introduce themselves: Brent and Katherine Johnson of Jaquith Road. Scott Mahoney, also on Jaquith. Jennifer Van Dyck and John Walker, attending their first town meeting. Amanda from the Collaborative, and Josh Dufresne of North Star Health are here to answer questions.

Regis Magnus and Dana McNair are sadly missed this year.

Michael Jeffery, thank you for your years of service, sense of humor and always sticking to the finer points of procedures. Many thanks also to Chuck Sweetman for his many, many, many years of unwavering service as Lister.

- **Article 2: To elect the following officers as required by law:**

Office	Term length	Candidate	Nominated by
Town Clerk	1 year	Chrystal Cleary	Steve Hall
Town Treasurer	1 year	Andrea Ogden	Sally Waite
Select Board Member 1 (2028)	3 years	Will Reed	Josh Wiley
Select Board Member 2 (2026)	1 year	Ben Freeman	Will Reed
Lister	3 years	Kevin Dommence	Chuck Sweetman
Auditor	3 years	Liza Dee	Andrea Ogden
Cemetery Commissioner	5 years	Dick Adams	Jonathan Bigelow
Collector of Delinquent Taxes	1 year	Jeff Cleary	Andrea Ogden
Grand Juror	1 year	Claudia Harris	Steve Hall
Constable	1 year	John Wiley, Jr.	Sally Waite
Trustee of Public Funds	3 years	Jamie Wiley	Andrea Ogden

Our town is small and much of the success of the town depends on the service of our officers, thank you for all who are new to service and deep thanks to those who have served.

• **Article 3: To hear the reports of Town Officers and take action on the Auditors' Report.**

Motion to move: Mary Licata, seconded by Mat Degan. Discussion of Officers
Road Commissioner Steve Hall said that a new plow truck is on order, the chassis is completed and will be delivered to the outfitter in NH to be finished with the plow and the wing. Should be in action this summer. Our current truck needs frequent repair. Design concepts of the town sand shed were displayed on the easels in the back of the room. Results of a grant will inform how much we can spend on the building, and how much we will need to raise a bond for if we choose to go forward.

Will Reed, Select Board member, states the grant will weigh heavily on our decisions of if it makes sense to go forward. Construction costs could be between \$750,000 to one million dollars. We will learn the grant amount later in March. So we don't know how much to get the bond for. There will be a warned Informational night in May and a paper vote tentatively May 13 if we do. Ben clarifies that the grant we applied for is \$500,000. It could be from 0- \$500K

Harry Lux- to the Road Commissioner: What is the plan for the existing truck? Steve Hall replied that we explored trading it in, but its condition can't be evaluated till we have the new truck for trade in, we are not inclined to keep it for a backup truck.

Jonathan Bigelow - we do not have a state mandate to have a building over the sand, now that its in the new location, right? Will says Yes.

Steve- getting the sand out of the wetland was the #1 objective, goal is to get it covered so we don't have to add so much salt to it, as the winter-long salt application results in deeper melting in mud season. The Sand shed as designed also includes a garage for the truck to protect it and design allows for extensions in the future. We could just do what we're doing.

Kevin Dommenege - can we reapply for the grant later if its denied? Steve Hall: It is a federally funded grant, so its up in the air, depends if it is already given to the state or still in fed hands.
John Hadden - Thank you, Roads crew, for improved road access for kids and workers up on Tarpley.

Chuck Sweetman speaking for the Listers - Landgrove is one of hundreds of towns under order to have a reappraisal due to exceeding a state valuation ratio, but there's only 6 firms that perform this. The Listers put out a RFP for a contract for May 1, 2027 in order to secure a firm availability. When the time comes, Listers will make contact with each homeowner to arrange a visit. We think the winter 2027 schedule gives us time to do this right.

Andrea Ogden - Treasurer details: Shout out to Auditors who really worked diligently all year long paying attention to minutiae. Charlie Howard, special thanks for filling back in to serve as Auditor. Thank you to Chuck specifically, not for service as Lister or for the years of tootsie pops, but because he came in with a lot of great questions about the Town Report after giving it a good reading during the February snowstorm. Lastly Andrea wants to remind new residents to declare their homestead at tax time, April 15th, and to know that that homestead declaration does not extend, even if you get an extension on your income taxes. There is a penalty for paying late because it throws off the funding mechanisms.

Jonathan Bigelow- Regarding the resurfacing money line item in the budget: a lot was set aside but not much paid out? Steve answered that we got a grant for resurfacing of Landgrove Rd and Hapgood Pond Rd, but it's a big project, and we were expecting to be reimbursed by FEMA money, which came in late and left the overall flow short enough to provoke caution. We were reticent to spend the resurfacing money until the FEMA reimbursement was secured.

Brent Johnson- has that cash been received from FEMA? The FEMA grant has been received. It can't be taken away at this point. Are there any federal grants in the 2025 budget numbers? A portion of the Fed Highway system grant is still out there. Fed is in, State is not. You think you're done but they keep asking for more and more info. Shed construction grant money is Federal but is not budgeted.

Ben Freeman put on his School Director hat, as the Landgrove member on the Taconic and Green (T&G) Board, but notes that all Board members represent all children in the district. Annual District Meeting was last week at Flood Brook. Tomorrow is the budget vote for Taconic and Green as well as the tuition for BBA, our sending school. The budget is increasing only by approximately 2%, projected that all of the towns in the district will see a lower rate next year, but with so much going on at the state level Ben is hesitant to predict anything. There's a lot of upheaval in the state and big changes are proposed: Governor Scott proposes to reduce the over 100 districts down to 5. So our local control that we enjoy in our districts would shift dramatically, to include all of southwestern VT. There is a proposal in the Senate Education committee put forward by our Senator Seth Bongartz, Chair of the committee, which has a higher number of proposed districts, preserving school choice and much of the structure we enjoy right now with BBA and other independent high schools. A third proposal, in the House, is more restrictive, and would potentially eliminate BBA as a public tuition option. Sen Bongartz, or Rep Hunter from Manchester, are on the Senate and House Education Committee, respectively and represent towns in the T&G district, you can get in touch with either of them to ask questions or express an opinion. Kevin Dommence - the 2.8 % seems low compared to other districts we've heard about in the news - why is that? We've pulled some unfilled positions out of the budget and further reduced costs through attrition and retirement, shifting staffing, and the District has a really good business manager. There are a lot more details in the school report, available online and in the town office.

Claudia thanks Chrystal, Andrea, Will Goodwin and Susan Lenox for running the office so well on Thursdays! Jillian moves, Tove Stigum seconds and Article 3 is approved.

- ***Article 4: To see if the Town shall authorize its Select Board to apply any surplus or unanticipated funds toward the proposed budget?*** Motion to move Article 4- Jillian Joyce moves, Sally Waite seconds. No Discussion - Chuck Sweetman moves to approve, Tove Stigum seconds, **Article 4 is approved.**
- ***Article 5: Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on October 1, 2025 by delivery to town hall postmarked on or before that date?*** Moved by John Hadden, seconded by Harry Lux. Discussion - Andrea Ogden: the post office is continually unreliable and jokes, "so bear that in mind when you stick your forever stamp that I think it means it TAKES 'forever' to arrive." You can also drop your taxes in our locked green mailbox. Motion to approve: Mary Licata, second Tove Stigum. **Article 5 is approved.**
- ***Article 6: Shall the Town raise the budgeted monies necessary to pay Town expenses and obligations detailed in the Town Report for the 2025 year?*** Moved - Mat Degan, Harry Lux. Discussion - none Motion to approve: Tove Stigum, seconded by Jillian Joyce, **Article 6 is approved.**
- ***Article 7: To transact any other non-binding business proper to come before said meeting, not acted upon in the preceding articles?*** To move the article: Steve Hall, seconded by Tove Stigum. Discussion: Will Reed - Our Mountain Towns Recreation Director has been doing a bang up job, Liam Elio has been amazing. Josh Dufresne from North Star Health is here, and explained the rebranding of Mountain Valley Health Clinic from Springfield Health Systems because we aren't Springfield, we're still the same people, still a 501c3, The appropriation comes under the North Star name, has an independent board of directors. The appropriated funds stay at MVHC.

Amanda from the Collaborative runs the after school program and summer program, which is expanding and serviced 75 families this year including some from Landgrove. Mat Degan from

Neighborhood Connections applauds the work NC does, please reach out for social services, elder services, meals on wheels, transportation. Thank you for the support. Please see Mat with questions or needs. Motion to approve Mary Licata, Sally Waite seconds, **Article 7 is approved.**

There is no Article 8, because the Clerk missed that in drafting the Warning. Whoops.

- **Article 9: Shall the Town agree to meet in 2026 on the first Monday before the first Tuesday in March (March 2, 2026) at 6pm for the annual Town Meeting?** Motion to move by Tove Stigum, seconded by Ben Freeman. Sally Waite would like it to be on Town Meeting DAY like all the other towns, but after the Motion to approve by Chuck Sweetman, seconded by Tove Stigum, **Article 9 carries**, with just the one, traditional, Nay.

Move to adjourn- Mary Licata, followed by **Adjournment at 7:16 pm.** Minutes respectfully taken and submitted by Chrystal Cleary, your Town Clerk