

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 27th, 2026
DRAFT

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by J. Demeritt at 7:06 pm.

2. ATTENDANCE

Members in attendance: Jessica Demeritt (Chair), Walter Crandall (Vice-Chair), Sam Peisch (Secretary), John Dunham (Member), Joe Szarejko (Member)

Others in attendance: Stan Wilbur (Town Administrator), Bill Joos (Treasurer), Stephen Pilcher, Tom Steadman, Tom Kenyon, David Hurlburt, Joshua Hurlburt, Lacy Coutue, Rick Hurlburt, John McNerney, Michael Hurlburt, Anthony DelGreco, Lisa Burns, Jamie Schulte, Don Mannigan.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

4. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA

The Selectboard agreed to skip the Facility Use Requests item.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

T. Steadman requested a balance sheet from December 31, 2025, and the totals for the reserve funds listed on page 34, noting he had not yet received a reply to his email request.

S. Pilcher reported that the Development Review Board (DRB) has contacted the town attorney regarding an appeal of a recent DRB decision.

D. Mannigan raised a concern about the lack of public posting of committee and subcommittee information, citing poor optics. The challenge of finding time/staff to compile and post this information was acknowledged.

6. APPROVE MINUTES

*W. Crandall moved to approve the minutes of January 13th, 2026 as written. S. Peisch seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

*S. Peisch moved to approve the minutes of January 22nd, 2026 (Special Meeting) as written. W. Crandall seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

7. REVIEW AND APPROVE CHECK WARRANTS

*J. Dunham moved to approve Payroll Check Warrant #60126 in the amount of \$17,340.66. S. Peisch seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

*J. Dunham moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #60126 in the amount of \$23,990.95 (primarily for Highway, insurance, and utilities). S. Peisch seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

*S. Peisch moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #60116 in the amount of \$47,511.74 (primarily for Highway repair, salt, and radios). J. Dunham seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 27th, 2026

DRAFT

*S. Peisch moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #51231 in the amount of \$12,660.38 (for tax overpayments/refunds). J. Dunham seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

8. REVIEW OVERWEIGHT PERMITS

W. Crandall reported that one overweight permit has been received and approved after verification of liability insurance. He will confirm that approved permits are forwarded for inclusion in the minutes.

9. FACILITY USE REQUESTS

Skipped

10. 2026 BUDGET

The Treasurer, Bill Joos, responded to questions, confirming that the projected increase in delinquent tax revenue, interest, and penalties is realistic due to the planned 2026 tax sale. The Board discussed the recurring annual variance in the property tax line and the impact of the state's education tax billing process.

The Selectboard agreed to the following amendments to finalize the budget:

J. Demeritt suggested increasing the ANAC Fund (Line 389) from \$20,000 to \$30,000. The Selectboard agreed.

S. Peisch proposed reducing the Highway Paving (Hot Mix) budget from \$676,000 to \$621,000 based on updated cost projections for the planned road segments. Following discussion, the Selectboard agreed.

J. Szarejko recommended reducing the Contracted Services (Line 319) from \$40,000 to \$20,000, and restoring the Highway department Part-Time Help (Line 259) line item from \$0 to \$12,000 for summer assistance.

The Board noted that the final changes resulted in a projected tax rate increase of nearly 10%.

11. HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

J. Szarejko provided an update on the Highway Department's activities, emphasizing continuous efforts in plowing, sanding, and equipment repair due to recent winter weather. A national salt shortage impacted operations, leading the department to run out of salt, though they successfully hauled in an additional 34 loads of winter sand. The crew dealt with ice build-up west of the Coyle curb cut site twice. The weekly updates show extensive work, including clearing roads early, cold patching, pushing back snow banks, training a new hire on plowing and loader operations, and preparing equipment for storms. A significant task involved swapping tires between the 2017 Western Star, which is down due to hydraulic failure, and the spare 2020 Mack.

The Highway Department faced consistent snow and ice challenges, working through an ice storm the week of 1/11-1/17 and dealing with continuous snow

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 27th, 2026

DRAFT

and drifts the following week. Activities included early call-ins for storms, greasing equipment, working on Mack and Western Star sander units, and meeting with a contractor about road repair. The crew worked late and overnight shifts to keep roads open during heavy snow. The department's focus remained on keeping all routes clear and safe for travel, despite the equipment issues and salt shortage.

12. COYLE CURB CUT

W. Crandall reported on his discussion with the property owner regarding the unauthorized curb cut. The owner was receptive to the plan to remove the material that is currently blocking the ditch and causing hazardous ice build-up. The removal will be done when conditions allow, and a proper curb cut application has been sent to the property owner for future use.

13. PINEY WOODS ROAD

S. Peisch provided an update on the Piney Woods Road project, announcing that FEMA has now obligated 100% of the federal funding for the road. He compared two primary options for the repair: a Local Contractor Option (~\$150,000) focused on restoration and installing cross culverts, and the Full FEMA Option (12.5% town share of ~\$1.2M project) which includes hazard mitigation features. The Board discussed the costs, risks, and character changes for each option, in preparation for setting the dollar amount for the Town Meeting warning article.

14. VT AOT SMALL SCALE SAFETY GRANT

*S. Peisch moved to apply for the Vermont Agency of Transportation Small-Scale Safety Grant and authorize J. Szarejko to work with the Road Foreman to select the projects to be submitted and sign the letter of support on behalf of the Selectboard before the February 2nd deadline. J. Dunham seconded. **The vote passed 5-0-0.***

15. SELECTBOARD REPORT

The Select Board discussed two main changes for the upcoming town report: adding a line for the 2026 tax rate comparison to the Select Board report, and including a note about potentially switching the fiscal year from a calendar year to the state's fiscal year. There was an agreement that starting the conversation about the fiscal year change is beneficial for transparency, despite the significant work it would entail. The board favored presenting the information in a concise, "Reader's Digest" format, perhaps a single page summary in the town report, with more detailed information, such as a "white paper" or appendix, available on the website or upon request, especially given the tight printing deadline. A key point of clarification for the fiscal year change discussion is that the 18-month tax bill would be proportionally higher, not an overall 50% increase in cost, and only applies to the municipal portion. It was noted that approximately 70% of towns already use the state's fiscal year and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) assists with the transition.

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 27th, 2026

DRAFT

16. TOWN MEETING WARNING

The 2026 Projected Municipal Tax Rate will be calculated and included in the town report, with the tax breakout (General Fund and Highway). Current figures are pre-meeting and will be updated.

The Town Meeting Warning will be finalized based on budget changes. A discussion occurred about reducing the proposed amount for the grader purchase (Article VI) by drawing on the existing Capital Equipment Fund (approx. \$100,000). The Board agreed to leave the article as is, requesting authorization for the full amount (\$311,930), which is the cost after a \$50,000 trade-in for the old grader. This allows flexibility without emptying the fund, which may be needed for other aging trucks. Wording will be added to the article to reflect the trade-in, clarifying that the total cost was \$361,930, reduced by the \$50,000 trade-in.

For Article VII (Piney Woods Road Repairs), the proposed article is: "Shall the voters authorize no more than \$150,000 for the repairs of Piney Woods Road, of which \$60,000 shall be raised by taxes and \$89,000 by non-tax revenue?" The \$150,000 cap is intended to cover repairs, assuming FEMA money comes in, and leaves options open. The language specifying the \$60,000 to be raised by taxes ensures the town can use taxes for the repair and avoids the appearance of asking for \$150,000 in taxes. The current wording for Article VII will remain as written.

Article VIII (Discontinue Mailing Town Report to Every Household) remains supported. The question of whether this would allow printing fewer copies will be directed to Sharon Gomez.

The final numbers for the tax rate will be updated in the warning, posted, warned, and provided to Sharon Gomez for the town report.

The Board confirmed that the warning for Town Meeting will be posted the following day.

17. OTHER BUSINESS

J Demeritt noted that a board member requested to stop receiving all emails related to the litigation with Vermont Gas Systems. J Dunham, the liaison for this action, confirmed he is willing to receive all of these emails directly and does not mind the change.

18. ACTION ITEM ROUNDUP

- J. Szarejko is authorized to work with the Road Foreman to select projects and sign the letter of support for the VT AOT Small-Scale Safety Grant application.
- W. Crandall will confirm that approved overweight permits are forwarded to Stacy Jones for inclusion in the minutes.
- S. Peisch will add names of the selectboard members to the Selectboard Report.

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 27th, 2026

DRAFT

- S. Peisch will finalize and send the Selectboard report to Sharon Gomez.
- S. Peisch will make changes to the fiscal year proposal/explanation to be included in the Selectboard report.
- J. Demeritt will make changes to the proposed tax rate and get it to Sharon Gomez.
- J. Demeritt will make changes to the town meeting warning and get it posted 1/28/2026.

19. DETERMINE TIME/DATE OF NEXT MEETING

February 10th, 2026 at 7:00pm

20. ADJOURNMENT

S. Peisch moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 pm. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.