

Town of Shoreham

TOWN MEETING 2026 MINUTES

March 2, 2026, 6:00 PM

Shoreham Elementary School

6:032 PM

Moderator **Barb Wilson** called the meeting to order. Girl Scouts from Troop 52032 led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Barb introduced Selectboard members **Steve Goodrich, Peter Lynch, Loren Wood, Mark Spitzner** and **Becca Kerr**, Town Clerk **Laura Siebecker**, and Town Treasurer **Carol Murphy**.

There were two (2) first-time Town Meeting attendees: **Herbert Dexter Oliver** and **Ruth Oliver**.

The youngest voter was **Megan Smits** (age 32). The oldest voter was **Sandy Witherell** (age 87).

State legislators **Steve Heffernan, Ruth Hardy**, and **Jim Casey** were unable to attend.

Barb introduced **Cora Waag**, to whom the 2025 Town Report was dedicated.

Barb reviewed the procedure of the meeting, and noted that only registered voters who are physically present at the meeting are allowed to speak unless otherwise moved.

Barb noted that the meeting could opt to allow Zoom attendees and non-voters to speak, and this was permitted by unanimous consent.

Barb explained that the meeting would be run following *Robert's Rules of Order*, and reminded the meeting that all motions and remarks must be addressed to the moderator, who must recognize attendees before they speak. She asked speakers to wait for a microphone before commenting, and introduced **Riley Kerr** and **Scarlett Treadway** as microphone runners.

Barb concluded with an explanation of the procedure by which an article could be amended.

ARTICLE 1

Barb read the meeting warning:

The Legal Voters of the Town of Shoreham, Vermont, are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Shoreham Elementary School auditorium (130 School Road) in said Shoreham, Vermont, on Monday, March 2, 2026 at 6:00 PM to transact the following business from the floor.

Voting by Australian ballot will be held Tuesday, March 3, 2026 from 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM at the Shoreham Town Office (297 Main Street).

Article 1: To elect all necessary Town Officers as required by law, by Australian ballot.

Barb invited candidates and write-in campaigners to introduce themselves. **Karen Jarboe-Singleton** announced her write-in campaign for a three-year term as Auditor. **Zach House** introduced himself as a candidate for a five-year term as a Trustee of the Platt Memorial Library. **Jonathan Hesco** announced his write-in campaign for a one-year term as Moderator.

ARTICLE 2

Barb read:

Article 2: Shall the Voters approve the sum of \$ 1,110,500.00 for the support of its Town roads and to pay outstanding obligations and orders?

Linda Larrabee MOVED and **Will Stevens** SECONDED. **Barb** called for any questions or discussion.

Linda asked why the 2026 highway budget has increased, when the 2025 budget was underspent. **Jason Paquette** [Road Foreman] explained that the small surplus was due to the dispersion of grant funds, and that the increased budget reflects rising prices.

Roberta Blodgett asked about the paving schedule, and advocated for work to be done on Smith Street, citing recent work on Watch Point Road and Basin Harbor Road. **Steve Goodrich** explained the upcoming budget and schedule will not permit work to be done on Smith Street this year.

Jeff Bronson asked about the presence of Addison County Sheriff's deputies regularly patrolling areas where violations could not be cited. **Steve** responded that the patrol coverage has not increased in cost to the Town, and noted that road signs are regularly demolished by vandals, creating areas where ordinances are unenforceable. **Becca Kerr** noted that the Selectboard had discussed the patrol routes with Sheriff Michael Elmore.

There was no further discussion; **Barb** stated the question and reread Article 2.

Article 2 was approved by voice vote. PASSED.

ARTICLE 3

Barb read:

Article 3: Shall the Voters approve the sum of \$ 483,997.23 to defray current expenses of the Town for the ensuing year and to pay outstanding obligations and orders?

Linda MOVED and **Sharon Tierra** SECONDED. **Barb** called for any questions or discussion.

Will suggested that the estimated FICA and Medicare expenses for 2026 may need to be increased due to higher wages. **Steve** noted that part of the increase in wages is because **Laura Siebecker** [Town Clerk] will be providing administrative support to the Fire Department and First Response Squad for three hours per. **Carol Murphy** [Town Treasurer] explained that the FICA and Medicare budgets were determined using the Town's accounting software (NEMRC), and she will look into it.

Steve explained a miscellaneous expense showing a transfer of \$66,733. This was an adjustment made to balance the books, and Carol followed the instructions of NEMRC support staff. He announced that an outside audit of the Town financials for 2024 and 2025 has already begun, which may further clarify the errors that caused the imbalance.

Will Stevens asked if the miscellaneous adjustment means that Article 3 needs to be amended; **Carol** explained that it is an actual 2025 expense amount, and so not being voted on.

There was no further discussion; **Barb** stated the question and reread Article 3.

Article 3 was approved by voice vote. PASSED.

ARTICLE 4

Barb read:

Article 4: Shall the Voters authorize the payment of real and personal property taxes on or before Tuesday, November 10, 2026, with delinquent taxes having a late penalty charge of eight percent and interest charges of not more than one percent per month for the first three months and thereafter one and one-half percent per month or fraction thereof, and interest of one and one-half percent per month or fraction thereof also applying to prior year delinquencies?

Linda MOVED and **Carrie Marini** SECONDED. **Barb** called for any questions or discussion.

Wendy-Ann Durkee asked why penalties and interest are charged on delinquent taxes, since this makes it harder for people to catch up. **Steve** advised that delinquent taxpayers can seek out lower-interest options to pay back taxes if the Town's penalties and interest rate cause financial hardship. **Wendy-Ann** noted that academic results are unsatisfactory given the rate of education taxes; she also suggested a no-interest option for delinquent taxpayers who make and keep to a repayment plan.

There was no further discussion; **Barb** stated the question and reread Article 4.

Article 4 was approved by voice vote. PASSED.

ARTICLES 5 - 23

Barb solicited questions or discussion on Article 5-23, to be voted on by Australian Ballot on March 3.

Marion Paquette spoke in support of Atria Collective (formerly WomenSafe), who served at least 22 Shoreham residents, both adults and children, in 2025.

Sue Harris spoke in support of Homeward Bound, and noted that the shelter's low-cost spay/neuter program is open to all pet owners, regardless of income level.

Judy Blake spoke in support of RSVP, which facilitates the Bone Builders exercise group.

ARTICLE 24

Barb read:

Article 24: To transact any other business thought proper to be brought before this Meeting.

Barb solicited comments on the 2025 board reports.

- Selectboard: **Peter L** pointed out a typo. No other discussion.
- Auditors: No discussion.
- Treasurer: No discussion.
- Fire Department: **Steve** announced that **Jason** is now Chief and **Chris Stearns** is an assistant Chief; also, both the Fire Department and the First Response squad are looking for new members.
- Roads: No discussion.
- Planning Commission: **Steve** noted that the commission is meeting twice monthly to work on the Town Plan and other projects. **Linda** mentioned that **Kevin Fox** is running a write-in campaign for a seat on the Planning Commission. She also invited community members to share their vision for Shoreham for the next 10 years, and briefly discussed the new Future Land Use (FLU) maps being developed as part of Act 181.

Leslie Goodrich mentioned her concern for the future of the community, due to the aging population and the decision by Addison Central School District (ACSD) to send Shoreham students to Bridport

Elementary next year. She encouraged the community to come together in a focus forum to address these challenges.

- Platt Memorial Library: **Cora Waag** [*library board president*] shared some of the programs the library held in 2025 and those coming up in 2026.
- Rec Department: **Molly Kerr** shared that each season, around 80 kids participated in sports. A new dance class is beginning, and she hopes to hold the annual car show on June 28.
- Shoreham Historical Society: No discussion.
- Town Flag: **Steve Jackson** introduced his fundraising plans to cover the cost of replacing the Town's 12' x 18' flag as needed throughout the year.

Barb disclosed that she is the chair of the ACSD school board, and recognized that attendees have questions and feedback regarding the decision to send Shoreham students to Bridport Elementary. She acknowledged that she could not address these comments while acting as Moderator, so she asked **Jonathan Hescoek** to take over as Moderator during the school discussion.

Jonathan asked if there was any discussion; **Greg Borah** gave a well-timed slow clap.

Irene Cadoret [*Shoreham School admin*] asked Barb to speak to the fact that a big decision was made for Shoreham School without the awareness of the wider community.

Barb restated the issue, namely, that the School Board voted to send Shoreham students to Bridport Elementary next year in order to facilitate single-grade classes. She cited low enrollment numbers, which preclude single-grade classes per ACSD's minimum class size policy.

Additionally, **Barb** pointed to unsatisfactory learning outcomes for students in Shoreham and Bridport, and that the decision was motivated by Superintendent Wendy Baker's goal of improving those learning outcomes; Dr. Baker feels that is best achieved in single-grade classrooms. **Barb** also noted that recent reports from the Vermont Department of Education indicate that Shoreham is one of the poorest-performing schools in the state, and so will be provided with more state support in the coming year.

Barb also spoke to the potential implications of Act 173, which calls for redistricting throughout the state; she said that if the decision to move students to Bridport wasn't made by the School Board now, they might be required to move them elsewhere by the state. The decision for Bridport Elementary to house the single-grade classes is due to its slightly larger footprint.

Becca noted that the investments made by ACSD and by the Town in the school facilities will be lost, since the physical improvements cannot be moved to a new building. She also asked how the additional state support for Shoreham students will be accessed, when those students are in classes with Bridport students as well.

Barb could not speak to the dispersion of state support; she noted that the AY26-27 budget allocates more to Shoreham and Bridport communities. She notes that the potential closure of Ripton Elementary, on the ballot for March 3, would not save the district much money because a number of staff were transferred to Salisbury School, along with Ripton students, and that staff wages and benefits, particularly health insurance, are the biggest driver of the budget.

Gail Wood asked how much of the school budget is being spent on the pensions of retired teachers; **Barb** referred her to the district's business manager for figures, but that teacher contracts are negotiated at the state level and so are beyond the purview of the ACSD board.

Loren Wood [Selectboard vice chair] indicated his displeasure with the school board's decision for Shoreham Elementary, especially given the amount of time and conversation the community spent on the topic. He also commented on plans to expand Middlebury Union Middle School (MUMS) due to the size of the student population; this could have been predicted when 6th graders were moved from the elementary schools to MUMS without any facility expansion.

Barb discussed the facilities analyses of all of the district's school buildings, noting that improvements are desired for MUMS and other schools. However, state education spending caps prevent the board from trying to secure a bond to make these improvements, so that will not be happening in the near future.

Valerie Szymkowicz expressed her appreciation for **Barb's** hard work as ACSD board chair.

Cora asked **Barb** what the net benefits to combining the schools will be for students. **Barb** cited a total school population of around 100 students, single-grade classroom, and more focused attention from intervention specialists.

Abby Murphy shared that she had attended every meeting relating to the future of Shoreham Elementary, and feels that the board's decision runs contrary to the desires expressed by the families of students. She voiced her support for the teachers and students at Shoreham, and her displeasure with District-level administration.

Chris Stearns spoke as a parent whose older children had a good education at Shoreham Elementary, but who has made the decision to homeschool his younger children rather than send them to the school. He expressed resentment at how the District characterizes the teaching of Shoreham educators, and suggested that changes to the curriculum could be an effective way to fix learning outcomes. He also recalled that literacy and math specialists may not be focused on working directly with students, but to help teachers improve subject-area lessons.

Steve Jackson pointed out that Shoreham Elementary's fate was predicted years ago, and no changes were made to change its trajectory. He cited the International Baccalaureate (IB) program as a factor, noting that he got no clear information from school and district administrators when asking about the benefit of the curriculum. **Steve J** asked **Barb** to explain the term "learning outcomes".

Barb defined "learning outcomes" in terms of state standardized testing in 3rd and 5th grades. Based on these test results, ACSD has provided additional funding to improve Shoreham students' learning outcomes for the sake of equity. She noted a correlation between socioeconomic demographics and learning outcomes, claiming that students from lower-income families performed worse academically.

Andrea Scott asked if Bridport would be provided with a late bus, and if afterschool activities would be offered. **Barb** referred her to Dr. Baker.

Nick Causton reiterated that the effects of moving 6th grade students to MUMS was predicted, and no action was taken to address them.

Trish Black asked how students could be expected to take advantage of the IB program once in high school, given the learning outcomes in earlier grades. She also inquired about the costs associated with training teachers to deliver the IB curriculum.

Barb pointed out that ACSD's IB curriculum is K-12, and the state requires districts to teach a coordinated curriculum. To abandon the IB curriculum now would waste the investment already made, as teachers would have to learn another curriculum.

Katie Flagg spoke in support of combining Shoreham and Bridport, because a larger student population may have a stronger positive educational impact than being at a school in close geographic proximity. She encouraged the community to consider the activities, events, and opportunities that would make the new school community special, and attract young families to the Shoreham area.

Yvonne Boire noted that instability at Shoreham Elementary had an impact on students' educational experiences in recent years, and that the school's population is too small to be provided with the academic support available in larger schools like Mary Hogan.

Steve Goodrich suggested the conversation move on, over the objections of **Leslie Goodrich**.

Leslie announced that she would have a sign-up sheet in the Town Office for any community members wanting to consider Shoreham's future with an aging population and no elementary school.

Jonathan yielded to **Barb** and stepped down as Moderator. **Barb** resumed as Moderator for the remainder of the meeting.

Barb asked if there were any final announcements.

Ginny vanHazinga announced that Pi(e) Day celebrations will be held at the Shoreham Congregational Church on Saturday, March 14. On March 21, the Church will host a legislative breakfast. Finally, she shared that the Church will close at the end of 2026 due to lack of funds. Members of the Church community have already shared their vision for the future of the building with the Selectboard, advocating for its continued use as a community gathering place.

Barb asked for a motion to adjourn. **Bob Warren** MOVED, and **Joe Rigg** SECONDED, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM>

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Siebecker, *Town Clerk*