Town Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2026

Gary Apfel called meeting to order at 10:00AM.

Robert Fortunati led with the Pledge of Allegiance and Marian Cawley was invited to lead everyone in America the Beautiful.

Anne McKinsey read an invocation on civility.

Jeff Spiegel read the land acknowledgement presented at Town Meeting in 2024 honoring Indigenous Peoples past and present.

Gary Apfel reviewed the rules of the meeting.

The legal voters of the Town of Corinth in the County of Orange are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Town Hall in Cookeville on Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 10:00 AM to act on the following:

Article 1. **To elect the following by Australian ballot. For the purposes of this article the polls will be open from 8:30 AM to 7:00 PM.**

Moderator for 1 year
Selectboard member for 3 years
Listers for 3 years, 2 years, and 1 year
Collector of Delinquent Taxes for 1 year
Cemetery Commissioner for 3 years
Constable for 1 year (unfunded)
Waits River Valley School Director for 3 years
Town Clerk for 1 year

No action required

Article 2. **Shall the voters approve by Australian ballot the proposed amendments to the Corinth Subdivision Bylaws as presented for approval by the Selectboard at its meeting of January 12, 2026. For the purposes of this article the polls with be open from 8:30 AM to 7:00PM.**

No action required.

Article 3. **To see if the voters will accept the various Officers' Reports as presented in the Town Report.**

Linda Weiss moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded.

Susan Fortunati asked why the year 2024 was listed in the Delinquent Tax Collector Report instead of 2025.

Anne McKinsey stated she had never received a report from Raymond Moulton and had used the previous year's report. However the Delinquent Tax Chart was correct as that had been provided by KellyAnn Donahue.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 4. To see if the voters will vote to eliminate the office of Constable as allowed under 17 VSA 2651a(d), effective July 1, 2026.

Joyce McKeeman moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded it

Holly Groschner explained that this position has not been funded for several years and most towns in VT no longer have a Constable because the person holding the position is costly to insure, is personally at risk and the State requirements for Town Constable have become so complicated that they are akin to State Police requirements.

Caroline Locke asked to whom the duties assigned by State Statute then go. Holly Groschner responded that they fall on the Selectboard Chair.

Susan Fortunati asked if the VLCT disability insurance that covers all town employees could also cover the Constable.

Holly Groschner stated that she had met with VLCT to discuss this and the coverage rate is for a constable increases significantly the overall cost of disability insurance.

Gary called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 5. To see if the voters will fix the compensation for the Selectboard members for the coming year at $2,000 each.

Linda Weiss moved this article. Jeff Spiegel seconded it.

Jeff Spiegel mentioned that the Bradford Selectboard is compensated considerably higher than Corinth's and our Selectboard does a great job and a great deal of work and deserves the town's appreciation.

Norm Collette stated that last year the compensation was increased from $2,000 to $3,600.

Carl Demrow explained that the Budget Committee decided to reduce it back again because of increased Budget concerns.

Gary called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 6. To see if the voters will vote $614,380, of which $354,500 to be raised by taxes, to support the General Fund.

Joyce McKeeman moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded it.

Holly Groschner stated that the Budget Committee really struggled to keep the budget from increasing as much as it has, but while the increase was in line with prior years (and averages 6%) the difference this year is the lack of savings or reserve funds available to offset the operating budgets. She noted that the Highway Department gave up their proposed raise in order to maintain their healthcare benefits. She shared a report with some budget numbers from 2023 through 2027 that demonstrate Corinth has the lowest operating budget of surrounding towns, as a percentage of the adjusted grand list.

Stephen Devoto confirmed that it is difficult to recruit and retain Town employees as salaries offered are lower than other towns in VT.

Linda Weiss asked where the reserve of $260,000 comes from.

Carl said that it comes from revenues generated as well as reserves left over from previous budgets.

Holly Groschner said that last year this time, the audits were only completed up to FY 2022. This year the Town has audits completed up to FY 2024 and 2025 is almost finished and will be completed prior to the commencement of the upcoming fiscal year. She then recognized the efforts of KellyAnn Donahue, John Sutton, Shirley Montagne & Susan Fortunati in keeping theTreasurer's office functioning and declared that the need for a treasurer is imperative.

Matt Nola asked about the continued increase in money paid to Upper Valley Ambulance.

Carl Demrow explained that that Upper Valley Ambulance is simply passing on their operating costs per capita. Susan Fortunati asked if negotiating a lower price was possible.

Carl Demrow responded that the per capita rate is the same for each town that Upper Valley Ambulance services.

Chris Groschner mentioned that in the past, the town had looked into other suppliers, but none were viable due to the Distance from Corinth.

Mike Tagliavia asked if the Upper Valley Ambulance increases are due to wage increases to improve employee retention. Carl confirmed this to be the case, along with the cost of new vehicles, repairs and an increase in insurance rates.

Holly Groschner confirmed that the Town had attempted to negotiate terms last year, but UVA insisted the Town pay in full before services are rendered.

Jeremy Goodrich said that UVA sends out a letter each year to every household in town for each household to pay a flat fee for any and all ambulance needs in the year and that that this can be considerable savings for those who need it.

Susan Fortunati wondered if the UVA's financials were provided as part of the of the appropriation request. Holly Groschner confirmed that they were.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Gary Apfel suggested the Town recess the meeting in order to hear from State Representative Mike Tagliavia.

Linda Weiss made the motion. Luise Graf seconded. All in favor.

RECESS

Gary Apfel called the Meeting to resume.

Article 7. **To see if the voters will vote $5,000, of which $5,000 to be raised by taxes, to support the Town Hall Capital Improvement Fund.**

Linda Weiss moved this article. Elizabeth Davis seconded.

Carl Demrow explained that this is an annual fund requisition. $40,000 of this fund will be used this year to replace the roof of the town hall building.

Norm Collette said it took 12 years to raise $60,000 for this fund. He noted that $550,000 of grant moneyhad been raised for improvements to the Town Hall thanks to the efforts of the Town Hall Building Committee.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 8. **To see if the voters will vote $59,180 of reserve funds to meet the Town's contractual obligations under the firehouse bond.**

Linda Weiss moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded the motion.

Holly Groschner stated this is in the Town's contract.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 9. **To see if the voters will vote $500, of which $500 to be raised by taxes, to support the Planning Commission.**

Joyce Mckeeman moved this article. Lee Porter seconded it.

Russ Pazdro explained that the $500 request is to show the State and on Grant requests that the Planning Commission has support from the Town. Many grants require 10% funding from the town. A recent $15,000 grant was received to help the Planning Commission update the Corinth Town Plan.

Joyce Mckeeman asked why this is voted on every year.

Carl Demrow said it was because this is a Reserve Fund and not part of the General Fund.

Gary Apfel called for a vote. The ayes have it.

Article 10. To see if the voters will vote $200, of which $200 to be raised by taxes, to support the Conservation Commission.

Linda Weiss moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded it.

Glynn Pellegrino stated that most of the Conservation Commission's funding comes from the bottle deposits given by the townsfolk and grants that the Commission is able to get. The $200 request is to show the State and on Grant requests that the Conservation Commission has support from the Town. He said the Commission donates money to help offset the cost of Green Up Day and maintains the Town Orchard behind the Town Hall. The Commission hopes to do more outreach and educational activities this year as well.

Jeff Spiegel said that the Corinth Community Coalition is coordinating with the Conservation Commission for a plaque at the F X Shea Forest and that Simone Whitecloud from Dartmouth will be working with the Commission to develop an educational program for fourth grade students, including field work in the Town Forest.

Gary Apfel called for a vote. The ayes have it.

Article 11. To see if the voters will vote $15,000, of which $15,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.

Daniel Wing moved this motion and Virginia Barlow seconded.

Virginia Barlow described the pilot project on White Rd: 126 Ash trees were cut down and removed from the right of way for $135 a tree. She proposed a new project this year for removal of 96 ash trees along sections of Cookeville Rd, Abe Jacobs Rd and Pike Hill Rd.

Ahn Lee asked if some money could be saved by residents cutting their own trees out of the right of way, but Ginny explained that because the trees fall into the roadways, they need to be dealt with by a professional.

Matt Nola made a motion to amend the article to read: **To see if the voters will vote $30,000, of which $30,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.** Dani Grover seconded it.

Matt Nola said as a tree service provider, tree service costs are more expensive than budgeted for. Andrew Alexander expressed concern that this number was too expensive and that he has taken trees down along his roadway without issue. Virginia Barlow said she did not think so much money was necessary, but that signs of the Emerald Ash Borer are all over town.

Mary Martin asked if there was any evidence that cutting all the trees truly slowed the spread of the disease and if it made sense to spare some to see if there could be any resistant trees to cultivate.

Virginia Barlow explained that less than 1% of the ash trees will survive.

Greg Smith said that perhaps the fund should be renamed to the Hazardous Tree Fund to accommodate the removal of trees leaning over the roadways in town.

Matt Nola asked the criteria for selecting which trees to cut. Virginia Barlow responded that rather than selecting each tree individually according to its current state, it was more cost effective to take down multiple trees in one area.

Bill Farr made a motion to amend the article further to read: **To see if the voters will vote $5,000, of which $5,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.** Kathleen Willis seconded.

Several people suggested that this discussion has been had several times and that the town should defer to the expert in this field: Virginia Barlow.

Andrew Alexander suggested that a report in the Annual Town Report would be good to allow people to know what their money is being used for in this fund. Susan Fortunati agreed.

The Town Road Crew was asked about how difficult it was for them to remove trees. Joe Blodgett responded that they have more issues with the pines and poplar and they simply wait until the tree falls in the roadway and then push it out of the way.

Sue Parmenter called the vote. Joyce Mckeeman seconded. All in favor.

On the Amendment, the nays have it.

Back to the original amendment: **To see if the voters will vote $30,000, of which $30,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.**

Sue Parmenter called the vote. Dutton Vought seconded. All in favor.

On the amendment, the nays have it.

Back to the original Article: **To see if the voters will vote $15,000, of which $15,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.**

There was further discussion culminating in Matt Nola making a motion to amend the article to read: **To see if the voters will vote $15,000, of which $15,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund, the $15,000 only to be spent on trees that are in imminent danger of falling into the roadway.** Susan Fortunati seconded.

There was further discussion about the fact that the ash trees in question are all in the right of way and will ultimately be imminently dangerous even if not right now.

Tania Aebi called the vote. Dutton Vought seconded. All in favor.

On the amendment, the nays have it.

Back to the original article: **To see if the voters will vote $15,000, of which $15,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.**

Sue Parmenter called the question. Jon Saken seconded. The ayes have it.

Gary Apfel called for a vote on the article. The ayes have it.

By unanimous consent, the Meeting recessed for lunch.

Meeting resumed at 1:16pm.

Article 12. To see if the voters will authorize any surplus remaining in the Special Projects Reserve Fund (#115) for completion of the town hall improvements projects.

Adam Miller moved this motion. Luise Graf seconded.

Carl Demrow explained that this fund is the tail end of the surplus created by the ARPA grant money.

Gary Apfel called for a vote. The ayes have it.

Article 13. To see if the voters will vote $994,340.00, of which $807,990 to be raised by taxes, to support that Highway Fund.

Dutton Vought moved this motion. Tom Reed seconded.

Lee Porter thanked the taxpayers and the Selectboard for their support of the road crew. Joe Blodgett said that the road crew works hard to keep the budget low. Salt prices experienced an unexpected sharp increase. He reiterated that the road crew had chosen to forego a raise in order to preserve their health care benefits.

Susan Fortunati stated that the missing number in the road crew expense chart was the retirement line item and should be: $13,340. Holly Groschner explained that omission was a clerical error due to so many transfers of information in compiling the town report.

Gary Apfel called for a vote. The ayes have it.

Article 14. To see if the voters will vote 97,150 to be raised by taxes to support the Highway Capital Equipment Fund, a portion of which $162,150 are payments due under the binding contracts entered into by the Town.

Holly Groschner moved this article. Susan Fortunati seconded.

Holly Groschner proposed the article to be amended as follows: **To see if the voters will vote 82,150 to be raised by taxes to support the Highway Capital Equipment Fund, a portion of which $162,150 are payments due under the binding contracts entered into by the Town.** Susan Fortunati seconded it.

Holly Groschner explained that Susan Fortunati noticed a clerical error in the amount to be voted on and hence why the change in the article.

Gary called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Daniel Wing asked about the reserve amount. Holly Groschner said that the reserve would be used up and that next year, the town would need to come up with the full amount of the capital equipment payment(s) in taxes.

Mary White asked why the 2025 Western Star truck was not included in the list posted on page 72 of the Town Report and why there was no sale of the older vehicle to offset the cost as usual.

Joe Blodget explained that the chassis of the Western Star was indeed in possession of the town, but that there was currently an 18 month delay on getting the body built. The older truck would be sold once winter was over and there was no need for it, but that the value of said truck at time of sale could not be estimated.

Holly Groschner stated that the sale of said truck could create some reserve money in the future.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 15. To see if the voters will vote $15,000, of which $15,000 to be reared by taxes to support the Bridge Reserve Fund.

Chris Groschner moved this article. Jeff Spiegel seconded it.

Carl Demerow explained that this is a reserve fund that we slowly acquire money in for times when it is needed and a bridge needs to be replaced.

Gary Apfel called for a vote. The ayes have it.

Article 16. To see if the voters will authorize the town to use funds received from the Better Back Roads grant program.

Jon Saken moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded.

No discussion.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 17. To see if the voters will authorize the expenditure of unanticipated State funds not included in the budget for specific highway and bridge projects applied for and received during the fiscal year.

Adam Miller moved this article. Luise Graf seconded.

No discussion.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 18. To see if the voters will authorize the Selectboard to appoint five or more taxpayers for the Budget Committee for 1 year.

Chris Groschner moved this article. Lee Porter seconded. The Selectboard made the following recommendations: Elizabeth Davis, Eileen Nickles, Mike Pittman, Jon Saken, John Sutton, and John Mellquist. Stephen Devoto nominated Carl Demrow or Brian Kirkpatrick (whichever was not elected to the Selectboard). Adam Miller commented that according to the article, the Selectboard need not make recommendations to be voted on, but Gary Apfel explained that this was traditional practice in Corinth and allowed the townspeople to make their own recommendations.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 19. To see if the voters will vote to have the taxes collected by the Treasurer's Office and fix the dates of payment for the same on or before the close of business the second Tuesday following Labor Day each year, and on or before the close of business the 2nd Tuesday of February each year. Postmarks are not accepted.

Susan Fortunati moved this article. Robert Fortunati seconded. Susan Fortunati explained that stating the deadlines in this way was less confusing to taxpayers that to state dates each year, but she questioned whether this needed to be voted on every year.

Holly Groschner said that it was included to receive feedback from voters and for people to remember when taxes were due.

Gary Apfel called for a vote: The ayes have it.

Article 20. To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Daniel Wing asked the status on the law enforcement situation in town.

Holly Groschner called attention to the Vermont State Police response report at page 65 in the Town Report. The Town pays the VSP for an officer to respond during off duty hours. Some towns in Windsor County are collaborating to form regional police force and that Bradford, Newbury and Fairlee have reach out to Corinth to discuss doing the same. She also said that in 2024 VSP had 30 vacancies and struggled to serve the area adequately. Our current contract with them will be reduced going forward.

Mike Pittman floated the idea of moving Town Meeting to Saturday to allow more people to attend who cannot get off work and he offered the use of the fire station to accommodate a larger attendance. Both Holly and Chris Groschner as well as Lee Porter said that studies and experience did not support the idea of a larger attendance with a Saturday meeting, but actually the reverse. However, Holly said it could be put on the agenda to be further discussed.

Katharine Lea said that Northeast Slopes is celebrating its 90th anniversary and there would be a Cake Celebration on March 15th with 90 cakes to celebrate and fundraise.

Martha Brough asked residents to inform her of any births or deaths of residents of the town as such events frequently happen outside Vermont and no notice is given to the town clerk.

Anne McKinsey told folks there would be a number of events to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States in the coming year.

Jeff Spiegel said the Corinth Community Coalition will be starting a food drive every Saturday morning at the Transfer Station to support the Food Shelves in Bradford and Topsham. Food will be picked up at noon each Saturday and food should not be left at other times. He also mentioned that the new mural that will be done by a combination of local artists and WRVS students at the Transfer Station will be gorgeous!

Gary thanked everyone who helped make Town Meeting possible.

Holly Groschner made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chris Groschner seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:21pm

Respectfully Submitted by

Martha A Brough, Corinth Town Clerk

Approved By
Corinth Town Selectboard Chair

Approved By
Corinth Town Moderator