

Town of Dalton
Town Meeting
March 11, 2025

Jay Ennis, Moderator, called meeting to order at 7:18pm.

Jay Ennis led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jay thanked the poll workers who made the election a success throughout the day and asked for a round of applause.

An introduction of the Select Board members Jo Beth Dudley, Eric Moore, and Tom Dubreuil, legal counsel Nathan Midolo, and Jeanette Charon, Town Administrator was made.

Jay delivered purpose of the meeting and the rules of procedure. Cathleen Fountain confirmed no ID's are required to obtain secret ballot voting cards. Voters will show their hand ballot sheet to obtain secret ballot cards, if necessary.

Article 1: Election of Officers

To elect all necessary officers for the year.

Town Election took place between 8am and 7pm.

Select Board for 3 years: Jo Beth Dudley 168
Shawn St. Cyr 131

Write-ins: Bob Sampson (1)

Tax Collector/Town Clerk for 3 years: Jeanette Charon 227

Write-ins: Karel Bean (1); Nobody (1); Cathy Dubreuil (1); Nicholas Bean (5); Laurie Sampson (2); Goofy (2); Bean Jr. (1); Corey St. Cyr (1); Christina Fintonis (1)

Road Agent for 3 years: Adam King 276

Write-ins:

Library Trustee for 3 years: Nancy Smith 265

Write-ins: Doris Mitton (1)

Planning Board for 3 years: Emily Thompson 159

Robert "Tom" Arrison 115

Write-ins: Doug Lyons (1)

Trustee of the Trust Funds for 3 years: Susan Zielinski 215

Write-ins: Nicholas Bean (1); Corey St. Cyr (1); Goofy (1)

Host Community Agreement Committee:
Karel Bean 188
Wendy Roberts 180
Michael Crosby 176
Paul Deveno 170
Corey St. Cyr 131
Robert Sampson 98
Pam Kathan 94
Richard Nadeau 91

Write-ins: James Dannis (1)

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Article 2: Operating Budget

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Million, Two Hundred Thousand, Eight Hundred Eighty-six Dollars (\$1,200,886) for the General Town Operations.

Motion to move by Jo Beth Dudley, second by Eric Moore.

Jo Beth Dudley motions to amend the budget by moving \$6500 from legal to financial admin. This does not change the total budget request. Jo Beth explained the process of the Select Board developing the budget using the 2024 expenditures and anticipated 2025 expenditures. Multiple meetings took place to discuss the proposed numbers, providing ample opportunity to make changes to reduce the budget. The Board then presented the proposed budget to the town during the budget hearing. After the budget hearing, the Board voted to use the budget and submit it for approval to DRA, Dept. of Revenue Administration. When the approved warrant and budget were presented to the Board for signature, Eric proposed the change but it was too late to go back and get everything approved again before town meeting. That is why the amendment is being proposed at this time. The budget is the Board's best estimate at the costs for 2025. She mentioned the flood from July 2024, and addressed the work that has taken place to get our roads back to being safe and passable, except for Smith Road. We have plans to do a lot of work this coming summer to strengthen the roads with funds available through FEMA. This is the opportunity to improve our roads and make them more resilient to floods in the future.

Tom Dubreuil spoke to inform the townspeople that he votes no on article 2. He did this because he feels article 15 from the 2024 town warrant and town meeting (asking that the Board provide a detailed itemized budget at the budget hearing, to be updated monthly and provided to the public). He states this has never happened. He has asked many times for the information and has never received it. He doesn't feel comfortable with the numbers on the budget that he feels they haven't had the opportunity to work through over the course of the year and they're much higher than tax payers can afford. This is why he didn't sign off on the budget and he encourages the voters to do the same. He is all for repairing the roads; Adam has been doing a very good job. They have had \$400,000 out of reserves, \$200,000 from TAN and \$300,000 from the budget to take care of the roads so far. He feels they should level the budget. The MS636 in 2020 it was \$464,000; \$443,000 in 2023; \$430,000 in 2024; \$726,618 for 2025. He encourages the voters to vote the warrant down.

Jo Beth suggested moving forward on some of the slides showing the explanation for the proposed increases. \$1M to \$1.5M is expected to be paid back to the town from FEMA. The largest budget increases are for the highway department. This is for two pieces of equipment and labor for road work this year, in addition to an increase in health insurance premiums, increases in legal for increased use and new counsel, and additional cemetery costs for survey of plots. There were also increases with the transfer station and sewer pump station sections of the budget. It's important to also mention the revenue offsets to these increases. \$8500 is coming from a grant for the hazard mitigation plan; sewer fees have increased but are paid by those residents using the system; about \$98k will come from FEMA for the increases in the proposed budget; \$43k was already received from FEMA just prior to the budget hearing. Those adjustments alone bring down the difference in the budget significantly. The election budget increased due to a tablet that must be purchased due to a new state statute. There is interest due on the TAN loan that we have left open due to the unknown timing of the FEMA funds. We needed the funds at year-end and have left the loan open in case we run into a cash-flow problem. Applying for a new loan would cost additional money in regards to fees and legal review and a higher interest rate. The Conservation Commission did state they could decrease their

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budget by \$500 at the last minute, but with a budget this size, that is a small change. Everyone is concerned about the budget because it affects our taxes. Our property assessment is approx. \$156M. Dalton's tax rate looks pretty good compared to towns with similar property values. A large portion of our taxes goes to support our schools and the county. Dalton has the lowest municipal tax rate currently, except for Carroll. Keep in mind that Carroll is unique because they have Mt. Washington and Bretton Woods. The slide we are showing here with the total tax rate can be confusing because the towns have different school districts which can make it hard to compare.

Jay repeats the amendment on the floor, moving \$6500 from legal to financial admin, not changing the total of the budget. Jay asked if there was any discussion on the amendment.

Tom Dubreuil stated they voted down a raise this year because of the flood and that's where they are taking the money from. He thinks it's a good choice; he's not being mean or critical but where do we stop spending the money. He states that Jeanette does a good job but that everyone still has to pay their taxes. Let's wait till next year and see if FEMA is going to come through and then things will be totally different.

Betsy Manzelli read aloud an email from FEMA employee Milton Stoppelbein "Mickey" to Jessica Keller, his counterpart at the State office of Homeland Security, regarding Jeanette's ability and willingness to produce excellent information as required by FEMA for storm catastrophes such as the one experienced in Dalton in July 2024.

Carol Sheltry asked why there was an increase of \$25k to legal; it will cost the tax payers a lot more money than a raise. Can that be explained? Scott Kleinschrodt spoke out stating that wasn't on the floor right now. Jay Ennis corrected Scott reminding him that we are talking about moving money in the budget and it is applicable. Scott claimed again it had nothing to do with the \$6000. Scott is reminded by Jeanette that we are talking about the amendment. Scott stated that's what should be talked about. Carol told Scott that is what we are talking about. Scott Kleinschrodt, now at the microphone, asked why the \$6000 is being moved from one category to the next; he hasn't heard that. Jo Beth answered stating it is to fund a raise for Jeanette to compensate her for all the work she has done with FEMA as well as the other work she has done throughout the last year as well. Scott asks to be transparent and state why we are doing what we are doing; it was never said. Scott was ready to vote yes on the amendment until he heard what it was for. He continues by stating that is under the table bologna, when you start moving funds from one place to the other and not telling why until you are asked, ending by stating "that is really really bad politics". Jo Beth replied that this was discussed at the budget hearing in quite a bit of detail. Scott stated that he doesn't think everyone there was at the budget hearing. Scott states he's asking now. They have the right to ask the question and now everyone knows why the money is being moved..to supply a raise for Jeanette Charon and he will vote no.

Carol Sheltry asked Tom if he didn't just make that statement a few moments ago, what the funds were being moved for. Jay asked for questions to be directed at him, the Moderator. She asked again, didn't Tom just explain that a few seconds ago; that's what she understood – it was for a raise.

Jeanette Charon rose to speak at the microphone. She stated that she didn't originally ask for a raise; the Board said that she deserved one. She deserved a raise because she did all the assessing work that allowed to be done by a tax collector, for the year we were without an assessor; she has managed everything, a list of things mentioned, for FEMA since the flood happened in July. That task is not in her job description as Town Administrator. If asked why she

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did it, it's because she is here for the town of Dalton. She did it because the town of Dalton deserves to have their roads in shape so they aren't destroyed the next time the rain comes. The town has spent about \$500k fixing the roads up to this point. All of the information she has put together will benefit the town to the tune of approx. \$640k. In addition to that, she has spent time, her own time since she doesn't get paid overtime, preparing a mitigation plan including costs which has now increased our suggested grant to \$1.1M, inclusive of mitigation work to rebuild just Blakslee Road so it doesn't wash away again. This is the work Jeanette does and what she is capable of doing. She wouldn't be speaking up for a raise for herself if it wasn't ok with Tom and Eric to give everyone on the highway department a raise without giving Jeanette a raise. There was no response from Tom when asked about it and a when Eric was asked about it, he shrugged his shoulders as if he could give a damn. Jeanette's point is that she has worked just as hard as the highway crew to get those roads done, maybe not on the streets, but in the office. There isn't anyone else here to get done what she's done. She asking to be compensated for the work she has completed in the last year. She doesn't think that's an unfair request. Jeanette lastly stated the \$6500 being moved had been discussed at the select board meetings, not just the budget hearing. Jay Ennis asked for any other comments. Jay calls for the hand vote on the amendment. By moderator's count, he determined that the motion carries. **Amendment to move \$6500 from legal to financial admin passes.**

Jay calls for comments on the original warrant for town budget.

Jeremy O'Neil speaks asking if it's possible to get this information in the town report going forward. He understands there are meetings and budget hearings, but people are busy and they can't always make time to attend those meetings. He also asked if the Road Agent was available to speak about the work he's currently doing on the roads.

Pam Kathan states over the years, it's gone up and we are now paying more taxes with a loss in revenue. She states we also have no guarantee in funds from FEMA with our current administration. If we do not get those funds, they will be footing to whole bill.

Mary Boone Wellington states that it's better to maintain things, otherwise they cost more when/if they break. You can apply that theory to the budget, too. Everyone wants roads that work. We can all agree the Board and committees work hard to put the budget together. Doesn't everyone wish that everything would cost less? It doesn't, but we need to pay for this whether FEMA reimburses us or not, which they will due in large to the excellent work Jeanette has done. We need to do it, it's not that much money. We pay less than the other towns; we need to stop arguing about this stuff and pony up because that's what we need to do.

Carol Sheltry asked what the consequences are if the budget is voted down at the meeting. Nathan Midolo, town counsel, informs the crowd that a budget must be passed tonight. Dalton is not an SB2 town and there is no default budget. It is not a reality where we just don't vote on a budget. The budget can be decreased, increased, changed, line items can be zeroed out, but a budget must pass tonight. The legislature must vote on a budget. Carol confirmed that article 2 can be amended and then voted upon. Nathan replied, yes.

Pam Kathan motioned to level the budget to \$1,009,300. Jay Ennis asked Pam for the written amendment, as required per the rules of procedure. Pam provides the moderator with a document. Nathan reads and agrees it is sufficient. Jermy O'Neil provides a second to Pam's motion. Jay confirmed this proposed budget number was in its entirety. Pam confirmed.

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Kris Ennis asked what happens to the accounts in the budget. If the budget is reduced, how do we know we will have the money we need to repair the roads. Nate confirmed those questions won't be answered tonight. As long as line items are not zeroed out, money can be moved between line items. He warned that going below a million, will significantly affect the town. Cathleen Fountain asked for the actual amount from what's proposed and what was requested in the amendment. Jeanette stated \$197k. She corrected herself with \$191,586 as the number. Jo Beth states that our expenses increased \$53k for highway labor and \$52k for equipment. Those reductions are the types of decisions the Board would have to make if the budget is cut. There may be a few places they could cut. She feels when they went through the budget, Eric and her, as well as Tom, who was at one of those meetings, went line by line and discussed them; it was easy to justify all of the items.

Gordon Jobe states that the proposed change would result in almost a 20% decrease. Who in the room would want a 20% decrease to their pay? He wouldn't.

Michael Trudeau stated the numbers don't work in the compared lines of the MS-636 and the slide presented, the numbers are way off. Financial admin and personnel admin have different numbers. Jo Beth stated the numbers are looking at last year's budget and what's proposed this year. There are reasons the expenses were less. State retirement started much later than it should have. The budget is not what you spent last year but what you expect them to be in the coming year. These go budget to budget for the expenditure year, not expenditure to budget.

Carl Lindquist states that the vast majority of the budget goes to highway and roads. We had an extraordinarily bad year last year and this budget highlights what needs to be done and the equipment needed to do it. The vast majority proposed to be removed would be from the highway department, and that doesn't make any sense.

Michael Trudeau states financial admin is completely left off the slide. This year's is more than double that shown on the slide...how do you account for that? Jo Beth states that looking at the detail, it was \$126k last year and this year it'd be \$135k.

Jeanette explained that the categories in the book used on the MS636 are slightly different than we had in our municipal accounting system, which most should remember we just started using in March 2024. There were some coding issues, which we discussed at many select board meetings when we worked on the budget, and discussed where the money was going. Jeanette was trying to work with the bookkeeper to make sure those discrepancies were taken care of. We can't go back to DRA and make changes. The budget that was handed out at the budget hearings and posted online match the slide. What we entered into the DRA was slightly different. \$40k was moved because we started the employee retirement plan later due to a select board delay. Same with financial admin. DRA's form shows for 2024 we had appropriations of \$60,200 for 2024 and we spent \$62,175. On our budget, provided at the hearing and online, the financial admin budget was \$126,035 and we spent \$126,859. \$135,616 is what's proposed for 2025. We should have this resolved going forward now that we have a year under our belt. The accounting system budget information is available online for anyone who wants them. Jo Beth is going off the budget. The reports should match going forward now that our coding matches DRA's codes.

Verna O'Neil asked where the funds came from for the roads. Jo Beth states we used capital reserve funds for paving roads and equipment. DRA also allowed us to use \$174k out of our fund balance. Approx \$420k was taken from capital reserves in 2024. Verna asked that if that's what we are expecting, why can't we use the FEMA money to cover the additional costs instead of increasing our budget. Jo Beth states we are obligated to appropriate what we know we need to

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spend. Some FEMA money will be used for roads, and then some will replenish the funds taken from capital reserve funds and fund balance. Jo Beth states that next year the Board can vote the decrease the budget. Verna asks that if the FEMA funds are expected, why are we increasing the entire budget now. Jo Beth states we have to budget for anticipated expenditures like staff, and other things you would expect for operations. The budget gives the authority to spend for the municipality. The revenue will offset part of the expenditures, but without the amount and payment date, it doesn't go onto the revenue side. We will have a public hearing to discuss the unanticipated revenue once it's received from FEMA. Verna asked the moderator if she can amend the amendment. She would like for the funds for Jeanette's raise to be added. Jay let Verna know she will need to bring it up once they vote on the amendment. **Jay repeats the amendment proposed by Pam Kathan to level the budget to \$1,009,300. By show of hand card votes, the amendment fails.**

Jay circles back to the original warrant article #2 to pass the town budget as proposed at \$1,200,886. Kenyon Tuttle requests to move the vote. Jay asks all those in favor of moving to vote, to raise their pink cards. Based on the hand vote, discussion on warrant article #2 is complete. A properly executed request to vote by secret ballot was introduced at the beginning of the meeting. Supervisors of the Checklist start the process for secret ballot voting. **Article passes to approve the budget as proposed for \$1,200,886. 88-34**

Article 3: Town Building CRF

To see if the Town of Dalton will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) to be added to the Town Owned Buildings Improvement, Expansion and Renovation Capital Reserve Fund.

The Board of Selectmen recommends this warrant article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Jo Beth Dudley, second by Eric Moore
No Discussion

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 4: Sewer Pump CRF

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000) to be added to the Sewer Pump Renovation and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund.

Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Jo Beth Dudley, second by Eric Moore
No Discussion

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 5: Highway Dept CRF

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Highway Department Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.

Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Eric Moore, second by Jo Beth Dudley
No Discussion

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 6: Paving CRF

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To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000) to be added to the Paving Capital Reserve Fund.
Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Jo Beth Dudley, second by Eric Moore
No Discussion

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 7: Fire Dept Vehicle Equipment CRF

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Fire Department Vehicle Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.
Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required.)

Motion to move by Eric Moore, second by Jo Beth Dudley
No Discussion

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 8: Fire/EMS Equipment CRF

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Fire/EMS Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.
The Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Jo Beth Dudley, second by Eric Moore.
No Discussion

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 9: Legal Fund CRF

To see if the Town of Dalton will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Legal Fund CRF previously established.
The Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Eric Moore, second by Jo Beth Dudley.

Wendy Roberts asked why there is a capital reserve fund for legal when we've already added almost \$25k to the operating budget line item. Jo Beth replied that it was formed years ago with the anticipation of needing additional legal funds should the proposed landfill move forward. Pam Kathan states that there is enough in the legal account; she wishes to decrease the amount. Jay asked for the amendment in writing. Pam does not have it. She withdraws her request to amend.

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 10: Solar Panel for Town Electricity

To see if the Town of Dalton will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$87,000.00 for the purpose of installing solar panels on the highway garage or other municipally owned buildings, to be offset by a \$82,000 grant and the remainder to be raised through general taxation." Notes: The electricity generated by the solar panels is projected to offset the total municipal electricity usage, thereby reducing annual town electricity costs to approximately zero with net metering.
Select Board recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

Motion to move by Jo Beth Dudley, second by Eric Moore.

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Jo Beth explains the grant as awarded to the town. The opportunity to get the solar array to help offset the power costs for the town is now, with this grant having already been awarded. The town would have an out-of-pocket expense of approximately \$5,000 for the system itself.

Kenyon Tuttle asked how much mitigation is required for support and what's the cost? Jo Beth replied that the installation will take place either at the highway garage or the fire station, both of which have passed the engineer's inspection for structural integrity.

Pam Kathan asked why we are appropriating funds for a grant. Jo Beth answered that this is a great opportunity for the town. Pam stated that 'green' grants aren't being paid out right now under the current administration. Jeanette stated this grant is already with NH DES. The town is working closely with DES to ensure that the funds are in fact being released prior to the town proceeding with the work.

Jeremy O'Neil asked how long these systems last and what is the plan to dispose of them once they are no longer useful. Jay answered that they are working on that side of things. The systems generally have a 25-year life span, if not more. Jeremy asked how much the town spends on electricity. Jeanette responded that the town currently spends approximately \$6k per year. This system would cover all the town's municipal electricity costs resulting in a 100% ROI in just about one year.

Article Passes by majority hand vote.

Article 11: Dalton Community Power

To see if the Town will vote to adopt the Dalton Community Power plan, to authorize the Select Board to implement the plan, and to take all action in furtherance thereof, pursuant to RSA 53-E. The Dalton Community Power Plan is an opt-out program that offers more flexible electricity procurement. The plan will initially provide lower electricity rates for residents, or it will not launch. Initial participation in the plan can be declined, after which enrollment becomes voluntary. The Select Board supports this warrant article. Tax impact: None

Motion to move by Eric Moore, second by Jo Beth Dudley.

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 12: PETITION WARRANT ARTICLE: SELECT BOARD ZOOM MEETINGS

To see if the Town of Dalton will vote to require that all public meetings of the Select Board in their entirety shall:

- Be broadcast live over the internet using Zoom or similar technology so that they are accessible to all in real time.
- Be recorded and promptly posted to the internet on YouTube or similar technology so that they are accessible to all at their convenience.

This article does not require the Select Board to enable any form of communications from the internet audience such as for the live questions or comments.

Since the town already owns the equipment and pays for the online services required to do this, the additional cost of this article to the Town is negligible or zero.

Motion to move by Kris Ennis, second by Betsy Manzelli

Carol Sheltry speaks in favor of this article as it would allow all residents to see the board meetings live regardless of whether or not they can attend in person. These recordings are important as it will allow the residents of Dalton to see how the meetings are running without the concern of videos being edited by anyone recording for their own personal use.

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Kenyon Tuttle asked about personnel issues being live streamed or recorded. He insists these should be in private and not available to the public. Nate Midolo confirmed any qualifying nonpublic discussion would not be live streamed or recorded per state statute.

Kris Ennis amended the article to specify that it would be used for public sessions only. Jeremy O'Neil provided a second to Kris' amendment.

Article passes by majority hand vote.

Article 13: Other Business

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

No other business.

Kenyon Tuttle motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jay provided a second. Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm.

*Janette J. Charon, Town Clerk
3/18/2025*