

—Slug:.....COMM-0855.dum.ATM_story
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—For section.....News
—Format.....News - byline and dateline
—Dateline.....Dummerston
—Article Number:.....43259



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Town budgets pass; library and community center merge

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3 TEXT BODY:

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4 It was standing room only at Dummerston Town Meeting
5 on Tuesday morning as more than 100 people crammed into the
6 Dummerston School gym for the opening of the 2026 Town
7 Meeting.

8 Some were elders who had participated in many of these
9 meetings over the years. Some were newer members of the
10 community, many of them young families with small children.

11 According to Dummerston School Principal Julianne
12 Eagan, school enrollment is increasing.

13 Apart from spending almost four hours (with a 45-minute
14 break for lunch served by Evening Star Grange) hammering out a
15 new municipal budget, in a non-binding vote Dummerston also
16 voted to express opposition to the continuation of ICE (U.S.
17 Immigration and Customs Enforcement) in its current form and to
18 ask Congress to dismantle it.

19 They also voted to condemn “the unprovoked attack and
20 the beginning of an illegal and immoral war against Iran” and
21 urged Congress to bring the military safely home.

22 The first item on the agenda was a vote to keep Cindy
23 Jerome as town moderator for her 15th and final year despite her
24 move to Brattleboro.

25 According to Jerome, by statute the moderator does not
26 have to live in the town she moderates.

27 The vote to keep her was unanimous, with Jerome
28 drawing cheers, applause, and at least one wolf howl.

29 “She’s done a superb job,” said Selectboard Chair Todd
30 Davidson.

31 “It’s been a joy and a pleasure,” Jerome said before
32 getting down to business. She began the meeting by reading the
33 names of more than 25 Dummerstonians who have died during
34 the year.

35 Town Meetings are, in general, budget meetings, and this
36 year the total municipal amount to be raised by taxes for the
37 coming year is \$1,553,869. It breaks down this way:

- 38 • For the General Fund: \$612,624.
- 39 • For the Highway Fund: \$567,240.
- 40 • For the Capital Fund: \$245,000.
- 41 • For the Highway Structures Fund: \$74,000.
- 42 • For the Highway Blasting and Crushing Fund: \$30,005.
- 43 • For the Putney Foodshelf: \$5,000 (\$2,000 more than in
44 the warrant).

45 This all amounts to an annual town budget increase of
46 13.88% — but that figure needs context.
47 “That increase is the municipal tax side of your property
48 tax bill only,” said Davidson. “The municipal side is only 20% of
49 the overall property tax bill. Education makes up the other 80%.
50 The net effect on a Dummerston property tax bill is an increase of
51 2.8%.”

52 **Legislative update**

53 Two politicians visited Dummerston Town Meeting this
54 year. The first, state Rep. Mike Mrowicki, D-Putney, now serving
55 his 20th year in the state Legislature, glowed as he cheered
56 Vermonters at the Winter Olympics.

57 “Vermont won more medals than China,” he said.

58 Mrowicki also talked about the ways in which Vermont is
59 being hurt by the federal government. For one thing, tariffs
60 against Canada are hurting Vermont because Canadians no
61 longer want to visit the United States. (VermontBiz has [reported](#)
62 that border crossings from Canada to Vermont declined 37% to
63 39% between 2024 and 2025.)

64 Then, the Federal Emergency Management Agency
65 (FEMA) is punishing Vermont, he said, by withholding money the
66 state still needs to rebuild after last year’s floods.

67 Mrowicki talked about how chilling it was to visit ICE
68 headquarters as an escort to an immigrant.

69 “We all want secure borders,” Mrowicki said to
70 applause. “But what we’re seeing right now is hordes of armed
71 men grabbing Americans, even killing Americans. This is not
72 something we can tolerate. I can’t think of anything less
73 American. Vermonters should stand up, show up. Our voices are
74 being heard. Our numbers are being noted.”

75 On the state level, Mrowicki said, there is some good
76 news.

77 The Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP),
78 which provided funds to add small “grandmother” apartments to

79 already-existing homes, had added 1,500 apartments to the
80 housing stock in Vermont, he said.

81 And the Legislature has added 1,300 child care slots in
82 Vermont and is paying workers more in an attempt to attract
83 young people to Vermont. Those measures got a round of
84 unexpected applause.

85 Turning to education, Mrowicki said he would not
86 support the program being pushed by Gov. Phil Scott to
87 consolidate Vermont's 119 school districts into five.

88 "I will not vote for a bill that doesn't protect our schools
89 like Dummerston and do it in an affordable manner," Mrwoicki
90 said.

91 Resident Jody Normandeau agreed. "I'm against
92 consolidation," she said. "The best thing right now is that we
93 need our schools."

94 Later, state Sen. Nader Hashim, D-Windham, also spoke
95 against school district consolidation.

96 "We are expected to vote on a map with a substantially
97 smaller number of districts, and Scott has threatened to veto the
98 budget unless we do," Hashim said.

99 "Cost savings don't come from shrinking districts, but
100 Scott is adamant. The uncertainty causes a lot of doubt, and we're
101 hearing stories of teachers interviewing for positions who have
102 withdrawn because of the uncertainty."

103 Other business

104 • Community Center, library merge governance:

105 Dummerstonians voted to merge the Community Center with the
106 Lydia Taft Pratt library under one board.

107 The vote approves the name change to the Dummerston
108 Community Center and Library.

109 Voters put \$12,000 toward hiring a children's librarian.

110 • **Less salt on the roads:** Meeting participants learned
111 that East-West Road and Middle Road are experiencing accidents
112 when icy is because salt is extremely hard to find right now.

113 Another road maintenance factoid: When it comes to
114 sanding dirt roads, larger pebbles not only provide more support
115 in mud season, they also cost less to crush.

116 • **Voters take interest in interest:** At the request of
117 several voters, the Selectboard agreed to examine where it keeps
118 its large funds and make sure they are earning a sufficient amount
119 of interest in the banks.

120 • **'You have my heartfelt thanks':** Read Miller of Dwight
121 Miller Orchards, which suffered from a fire in August that
122 destroyed its entire processing and storage facility, thanked the
123 town for its financial and emotional support.

124 "You have my heartfelt thanks," Miller said to applause.
125 "I love being part of this community."

126 • **Tax exemptions:** The voters also agreed to allow the
127 Dummerston Grange and Green Mountain Camp to have tax
128 exempt status.

129 • **And ... scene:** Then, at 2:20 p.m., after another round
130 of applause for Jerome, town meeting adjourned for another year.

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