2026 Annual Town Meeting Minutes

On March 10, 2026 at 8:00a.m., Moderator Richard Haskins opened the Town of Hancock's Annual Town Meeting by reading the Town Warrant:

Town of Hancock, New Hampshire, Warrant 2026

To the inhabitants of the Town of Hancock in the County of Hillsborough in the state of New Hampshire qualified to vote in Town Affairs; you are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Hancock Meetinghouse in said Hancock on Tuesday, the tenth (10th) day of March 2026, at eight of the clock in the forenoon until seven of the clock in the evening, for ballot voting of Town Officers and other matters requiring ballot vote; and to meet at said Hancock Meetinghouse in said Hancock on Saturday, the fourteenth (14th) day of March 2026, at nine of the clock in the forenoon, to act upon the following:

Article 01 To Choose Town Officers
To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year.

Article 02 Amendment No. 1 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, to improve the definitions, improve the readability and reduce inconsistencies across the Ordinance. The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 1. The full text is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

Article 03 Amendment No. 2 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board...The full text is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

Article 04 Amendment No. 3 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board... The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 1. The full text is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

Article 05 Amendment No. 4 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board... The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 1. The full text is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

Article 06 Prohibit Keno
Shall we prohibit the operation of keno games within the Town of Hancock?

Article 07 Prohibit Games of Chance
Shall we prohibit the operation of games of chance within the Town of Hancock?

Moderator Haskins then accepted a motion to forego reading of the balance of the Warrant at this time by Thomas Bryan and seconded by Alice Welden. All present voted in favor of the motion. Moderator Haskins then declared that the polls were open and would remain so until 7:00 p.m.

At 7:00 p.m. Moderator Haskins declared the polls closed. A motion to reconvene on Saturday, March 14, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at the Hancock Meetinghouse was moved by Dan LaPlante and seconded by David Kidd. The motion carried by voice vote. At 7:03pm, Moderator Haskins declared that the meeting was adjourned as prescribed and that being that the meeting will reconvene at 9am on Saturday, March 14th 2026, at the Hancock Meetinghouse.

The ballots cast were then counted and tabulated and the results posted.

The reconvened meeting was called to order by Moderator Haskins on March 14 at 9:06 a.m. in the Hancock Meetinghouse in the Lower Meeting Room.

Moderator Haskins then asked Interim Chief of Police, Terry Choate to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator Haskins announced that there are coffee, munchkins, baked goods and water from the Hancock Fire Department Auxiliary. He added that the Town Reports, a DPW Road handout and a Hancock Revaluation handout are on the back table.

Moderator Haskins introduced the Select Board Betsy Villaume, Chairman, Ginger Smith and Laurie Bryan, Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne, Town Clerk and Clerk of the Meeting Joan Joseph, Town Treasurer William Flatley, Supervisors of the Checklist Kathy Anderson, Alice Welden and James Mason, Moderator Richard Haskins, Fire Chief Tom Bates, Interim Police Chief Terry Choate, Director of Public Works Tyler Howe, Town Administrative Assistant Linda Coughlan, Library Director Amy Markus. He also stated that the meeting would be recorded by Jon GrosJean to help Joan with preparing the minutes.

Moderator Haskins announced that the Ballot Clerks for the meeting would be Neal Cass, Hunt Dowse, Linda Coughlan and Brad Geer.

Microphone Runners would be Sophia LeFebvre and Maddison Bedard.

Moderator Haskins proposed a set of Rules of Order for the meeting, and they were accepted by voice vote. He also stated that "For any motion five voters present may request a vote by secret ballot by signing a petition after the motion has been seconded and before the vote has been called". He identified that the pink voting card would be used for a show of hands vote. Please don't hand them to someone else.

He then asked the meeting to grant "Voice without Vote" status to a non-resident namely our Public Works Director, Tyler Howe. It was so granted.

Moderator Haskins presented Certificates of Recognition to the following

Ed Kokoski Police Regionalization Study Committee 1 year
Michael Cass Police Regionalization Study Committee 1 year
Stephen DiCicco Police Regionalization Study Committee 1 year
Suzie Shevenell Archives Committee 2 Years
Kathy Anderson Community Power Committee 3 Years
Thomas Shevenell Capital Improvements Committee 7 Years
Jeffery Reder Zoning Board of Adjustment 7 Years
Tara Kessler Planning Board 7 Years
Richard Warner Volunteer Lake Assessment Program for Norway Pond 19 Years
Jack McWhorter Conservation Commission 10 Years
Laurie Bryan For completing a vacant Selectboard position
Tom Bates Planning Board 20 Years
Jeffrey Brown, Selectman 5.5 Years

Moderator Haskins stated: So now we are resuming the meeting that adjourned on March 10, 2026.

Moderator Haskins asked Town Clerk, Joan Joseph, if copies of the signed Warrant were posted at the Hancock Post Office, the Hancock Town Building and here in the Hancock Meetinghouse at least seven days prior to the Town Meeting. Clerk Joseph responded that they were.

Moderator Haskins requested, received the signed Warrant and read it.

Town of Hancock, New Hampshire, Warrant, 2026

To the inhabitants of the Town of Hancock in the County of Hillsborough in the state of New Hampshire qualified to vote in Town Affairs; you are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Hancock Meetinghouse in said Hancock on Tuesday, the tenth (10th) day of March 2026, at eight of the clock in the forenoon until seven of the clock in the evening, for ballot voting of Town Officers and other matters requiring ballot vote; and to meet at said Hancock Meetinghouse in said Hancock on Saturday, the fourteenth (14th) day of March 2026, at nine of the clock in the forenoon, to act upon the following:

Article 01: To Choose Town Officers.
To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year.

Total ballots cast - 418 (including 6 absentee ballots). At the start of the day we had 1422 voters on the checklist. We received and accepted 2 new voter registration forms. At the end of the day we were 1424 voters on the checklist. We had 29.3% voter participation.

The results from ballots cast were:
Select Board for three years - Peter Webster 373
Common Commissioner for three years - Jacqueline Brittain 12
Water Commissioner for three years - Thomas Shevenell 392
Library Trustee for three years - Sadie Faber 388
Trustee of Trust Funds for three years - David Huntington 383
Cemetery Trustee for three years - Patricia MacFarlane 202
Matthew Simmons 161
Supervisor of The Checklist for six years - Catherine Closter 378
Town Clerk for three years - Joan Joseph 396
Town Moderator for two years - Richard Haskins 384

Article 02: Amendment No 1
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, to improve the definitions, improve the readability and reduce inconsistencies across the Ordinance. The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 1. The full text is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

The results from ballots cast were: Yes 365 No 29

Article 03: Amendment No. 2 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, which introduces "Above Ground Floor Dwelling in Mixed Use Building" as a use permitted by Conditional Use Permit in the Village Commercial District? The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 2, the full text of which is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

The results from ballots cast were: Yes 315 No 46

Article 04: Amendment No. 3 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, which removes Section 18.3 related to "Creation of New Lots Lacking Required Frontage?" The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 3. The full text of which is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours.

The results from ballots cast were: Yes 325 No 42

Article 05: Amendment No. 4 to Town Zoning Ordinance
Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 4 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, which removes dimensional restrictions from the definition of "Trailer or Motor Home" in Article II. The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 4, the full text of which is available on the Town Website and in the Town Offices during business hours

The results from ballots cast were: Yes 325 No 43

Article 06: Prohibit Keno
Shall we prohibit the operation of keno games within the Town of Hancock?

The results from ballots cast were: Yes 332 No 67

Article 07: Prohibit Games of Chance
Shall we prohibit the operation of games of chance within the Town of Hancock?

The results from ballots cast were: Yes 306 No 90

David Carney made the comment that there is no internet service here in the voting area of town and that he thinks it is disingenuous to say to go to the website to read the full text of the warrant articles. He suggested that the warrant articles should be in the voting booths for all to read.

Article 08: Paved Road Project (Bond)
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars ($520,000) for the purpose of paved road capital improvements; Five Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars ($520,000) of such sum to be raised through the issuance of bonds or notes under and in compliance with the Municipal Finance Act, RSA 33:1 et seq., as amended; to authorize the Selectboard to apply for, accept and expend federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; to authorize the Selectboard to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver said bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and to authorize the Selectboard to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto. The Selectboard recommends this article. (3/5 ballot vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

DPW Director, Tyler Howe stated that the handouts show that this will start in the summer of 2026 and last for four years. Reclamation-grind up will start this summer, leave it for a year so it can settle. Then we will base it and top it and chip seal it the year after.

Moderator Haskins stated that this being a bond vote, the poll/ballot box for this must remain open for one hour, and declared the polls are open at 9:43 a.m.

At 10:43 a.m. Moderator Haskins closed the ballot box and the counting began. The motion was voted by ballot and passed by more than the ⅗ majority required - it received 96% of the affirmative votes - the count was: Yes 137 No 10. At 10:58 Moderator Haskins read the results and declared that the article had passed.

Article 09: Borrow for Improving Compliance with Federal Lead and Copper Rule

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars and no cents ($380,000) for the purpose of all work needed to identify, engineer, purchase of materials and equipment, and replace water system services improving compliance with the Federal Lead and Copper Rule. Such sum to be raised by the issuance of Bonds or Notes not to exceed $380,000 under, and in compliance with, the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (NH RSA 33:1 et seq., as amended) and to authorize the Selectboard to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the date, term of payment, and rate of interest thereon. Further, to take such other actions as may be necessary to affect the issuance, negotiation, sale and delivery of such bonds or notes as shall be in the best interest of the Town of Hancock, NH. And to further authorize the Selectboard to apply for, accept and expend unanticipated money from the state, federal or other governmental units or a private source which becomes available pursuant to RSA 31:95-b for the same or similar purposes of this article. The Selectboard recommends this article. (3/5 ballot vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Tom Shevenell stated the Federal Lead and Copper Rule is simple, the Federal Government has required that every single service line in the country needs to be inventoried, to determine if there is any lead in the service lines or not. This is essentially a town project that goes through the Select Board because Select Board is the only entity that can borrow money. The Water Commissioner cannot borrow money but we will be paying a portion back through the user fee. The State of New Hampshire has a special program; they have been receiving 30 million dollars a year for the last four years and have one year to go to be able to inventory all the lines in the State. Our funding will be coming from them if we pass this authority to borrow today.

Moderator Haskins asked that this is just the inventory and not to replace anything at this time.

Tom Shevenell responded, our first step is to inventory it all and find out what we have and then replace what we need to replace. The funding from the State has approximately 66% principal forgiveness. For example, if we spend $300,000 dollars on the project, they take off $200,000 dollars and it's a $100,000 dollar project to us that we need to turn into a loan. This needs to pass so that we have a chance to get the 66% reduction. No matter what happens we have to make this regulatory requirement period. This is the most economical way to do this.

The reason why the inventory process is so expensive is that we have to go down to the service line which is about six feet below grade and take a look at the curb stop. The curb stop is where we can shut off and turn on the water at any particular property. We need to know what the material is on either side of the curb stops, whether it's copper, plastic or lead. We then document it with a photograph. To do that we have a couple of choices. Have Tyler's crew out there, dig a big hole 10x10 to the service line or a piece of equipment called a Hydrovac for pot holing. A Hydrovac essentially burst water down a small hole around the curb stop. Looking at this project, we could do two things, contract it out with firms that have that kind of equipment or purchase the equipment ourselves. We could have our own piece of equipment with a Capital Asset. That Capital Asset could be used in several different ways after we finish the project.

You are authorizing the Select Board to apply, accept and expend unanticipated money from State and Federal Programs, other government units and other sources. This gives them the ability to apply for the money at the State, it also means the user fees are going to have to contribute to part of this process.

Des Ford asked, "Who is going to pay for this bond – the users or the entire town?"
He wanted to be assured that non-users would not have any financial responsibility for paying for this bond.

Tom Shevenell explained that while the users of the water system will be contributing to the repayment of this bond and that the Town is the only entity that is authorized to borrow money and that the water system is owned by the Town as an asset but that as this is a regulatory requirement, the users will be paying for the cost of doing this work.

Tom pointed out that all residents are secondary users / beneficiaries of the water system because water is necessary for the school, fire, business in the downtown area and other town facilities which make up the character of the Town.

Johnathan Coyne, Town Administrator, pointed out that the town has done this before when it facilitated the UV Chlorinator plant capital improvement to the water system. The fiscal issues of that improvement were managed by the Selectboard (as the Executive entity for the Town) as they are the only ones allowed to enter into borrowing arrangements. The budgets for those expenses were attributed to the Water Department and they were addressed by user fees.

Alice Welden – We just voted on an article that takes care of the roads in the town. I don't live on every road in this town. So why should I pay for the other people's roads? I'd also like to mention a quote from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr –"Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society". Alice went on by saying, "I choose to live in a civilized society... we have to care for our neighbors". "This is a beautiful town, it is a wonderful town and I thank you for all the work that you have done."

Deborah Sampson – Every person in this room, who uses the toilet, who gets coffee, who uses anything in this building is a secondary user. If you go to the library, if you go to the Town Hall, we are paying for a Town asset. If we did not have this excellent water in our water system that we do, everyone in town would suffer. Not just from not accessing the water in a secondary way but also imagine what would happen in this town if that water system collapsed or we did not meet requirements to deliver to it. Everyone's property taxes would be destroyed. There's a hugely important aspect of supporting this water system in intelligent, broader thinking ways than our own little home. I really urge you to consider that because there are many towns around this country that are losing their central water supplies and it is devasting to them, we don't want that to happen here.

Moderator Haskins stated that this being a bond vote, the poll/ballot box for this must remain open for one hour, and declared the polls are open at 10:29 a.m.

At 11:29 a.m. Moderator Haskins closed the ballot box and the counting began. The motion was voted by ballot and passed by more than the ⅗ majority required - it received 98.5% of the affirmative votes - the count was: Yes 135 No 2. At 12:03 Moderator Haskins read the results and declared that the article had passed.

Article 10: Lease a New Six-Wheel Dump Truck

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to authorize the Selectboard to enter into a long-term lease/purchase agreement in the amount of $285,000 payable over a term of five payments for the purpose of lease purchasing a new six-wheel truck upfitted with dump body with built in sander, plows, and ancillary equipment, and to raise and appropriate the sum of $64,513, for the first year's payment for that purpose with said amount to come from the DPW Machinery, Equipment and Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund, and to authorize the trade in of the 2016 International 7400 six-wheel dump truck to reduce the lease purchase cost. The Selectboard recommends this article. (3/5 ballot vote required).

The Article was "Moved as read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

DPW Tyler Howe spoke and explained that this truck was originally ordered in 2015 its a 2016 model year. The dealer told us that they will give us a minimum $105,000 dollars in seven years if we trade it in. The reason why this one is a little more expensive is the plow and wing on the current truck have not been replaced in four vehicles.

David Carney asked, "Do you think we are going to get $105,000 dollars for the trade in?"
DPW Tyler Howe responded to the truck that is the 2026, they put it on the payboard for seven years because it's under warranty for seven.

Chris Cornell asked if it is a lease or a purchase and do we get the truck in the end?

DPW Tyler Howe explained that we were essentially buying it.

Moderator Haskins stated that this being a bond vote, the poll/ballot box for this must remain open for one hour, and declared the polls are open at 10:46 a.m.

At 11:46 a.m. Moderator Haskins closed the ballot box and the counting began. The motion was voted by ballot and passed by more than the ⅗ majority required - it received 98.6% of the affirmative votes - the count was: Yes 142 No 2. At 12:36 Moderator Haskins read the results and declared that the article had passed.

Article 11: Operating Budget
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $3,842,405 for general municipal operations inclusive of Water Department Operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Selectman Laurie Bryan motioned to amend the sum to $3,797,433. Ginger Smith seconded the Amendment.

Selectman Laurie Bryan explained that the amount has gone down to $3,797,433 dollars because we make a couple of errors in our original calculations.

Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne explained that the amount of $3,707,433 was presented at both the budget hearings and it was an error on his behalf. We had reduced the road project out of the operating budget and the water department made some changes and it was reduced . I just didn't change the number in the Article.

The motion to Amend was voted by voice and passed unanimously.

Selectman Betsy Villaume spoke and explained that they had a good turn out of the public hearings regarding the budget and warrant article. I'd like to summarize how we managed to keep it essentially flat with last year. I worked with Tyler on tweaking the paved road schedule a little bit and pushed a few roads out. We felt as a Selectboard that it was really important to bring many of our key employees up to market wage rates. The renewal of the employee benefit plan is slightly less, unexpected and undesirable staff reduction in the Police Department. We are looking to hire a full time Police Officer and a part time officer. We changed prosecutorial services from hosting the Monadnock Group to contracting on an as needed basis, with an attorney based in Manchester. We also changed our Cyber Security provider which gave us a small cost saving. The Fire Department used trust funds to purchase several pieces of replacement gear and equipment rather than adding to the operating budget. Plan building projects under buildings and grounds are small this year. The only exception, there is a proposal to replace the shingles on the bandstand with cedar shakes and that falls under the Common Commission budget.

The largest increases came from property liability insurance, the ambulance contract with Peterborough which we have zero control over. We are changing the cemetery mowing from in-house to an outside service provider. The Fire Department dispatch service had a pretty substantial increase.

Debt services are increasing, there is a small loan coming off the payment schedule but the first bond payment on the Middle Road Paving Project hits cash flow this year.

David Carney stated that he would like to commend the Selectmen and Budget Committee for a level budget. He then asked what entity in town certifies that every building and is there somebody who certifies that every piece of construction done is on the tax base.

Selectman Betsy Villaume responded that it was an outside contractor that we use for our assessing services and every year there is a reciprocal uptake on building permits filed for and work completed. This year it will come up later in a

different Warrant Article in 2026 there is a complete full statistical revaluation of the town and many items are picked up there that may not have required a building permit or there wasn't one.

David Carney stated that there are properties in the same range but as you drive by you see additional things in their yard and on the land. I hope it could be a point of emphasis, I am in favor of everyone paying their fair share.

Nathaniel Peirce stated that this Article does not include the appropriations, how much do you think the budget will be increased if we approved all these other Articles that require taxation?

Selectman Betsy Villaume responded that many of the Articles coming up that deal with Capital Reserve Funds additions, many of those are being funded from fund balance so there will be no tax implication.

Richard Hum stated that he noticed a small difference between what you have on the Warrant and the handout. Handout ends in 473 and what you read ends in 433. The Selectboard agreed it is an oversight, it is a $40.00 dollar difference.

David Carney presented $40.00 dollars to Jonathan Coyne and asked that we move on. Moderator Haskins thanked David Carney for his generosity.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Moderator Haskins announced that the Selectboard has asked for a few moments of your time for a Public Service Announcement:

Windy Row Bridge Discussion
Selectman Betsy Villaume stated that the most recent inspection on the Windy Row bridge has come back with a further deterioration in the steel super structure. It has been downgraded from a four which is deficient to a three which is poor. In combination with that the decking has been reduced, its quality rating has gone done to a four and substructure which are the concrete peers as well as the condition of the banking on either side are also at a four. The deterioration is actually accelerating, so it is Tyler Howe's recommendation that we close it as soon as possible. We are not going to do that with a vote today, we want to bring it to your attention that we are going to hold a public information session at 6:30 P.M. on Monday 23rd of March in the Barbara Caverly Room to further flush out this thought. We have started some of the logistics. We have reached out directly; department to department with Peterborough and Harrisville, since they are adjacent towns on that side. Highway departments to Highway departments, Police departments to Police departments, Fire Emergency services to Fire Emergency services, Select Board to Select Board. I know that this has been mentioned in the Ledger Transcript as part of our regular Select Board meeting and there are some further logistics to be done. We plan on extensive signage; we will also need to contact the State of Transportation. When we close it, we will need to notify Emergence Service dispatch. There are detours, so if you're coming from the Peterborough side of Windy Row you can go down Sargent Cap Road to come to the village. If you are on Middle Road wanting to go to West Peterborough you would just stay on Middle Road. We have had a traffic study done in December 2024 and the first week of January 2025. During that two-week period the average trips across the bridge were just under one hundred a day. It's kind of a tricky week, we may want to do that again. It is a well-used road but not heavily, heavily traffic. With the alternative routes that are fairly close to the bridge itself, we don't feel it's going to be a real imposition if we close it to vehicular traffic, possibly as soon as April first. This will all be discussed again in a more open forum with more information on the 23rd of March at 6:30 P.M. I would encourage anyone who's interested, concerned, want to make sure we are going to do this logistically appropriately so please come.

Moderator Haskins then read the Maple Syrup Report 2026 as submitted by Mark Thompson.
Maple Syrup Report – 2026
Town meeting, mud season and, oh yeah, it's sugaring season.

It feels like it's late this year. Temperatures this week feel more like late season rather than the beginning. Many sugar makers tap trees in January to catch the early run. Some made a little syrup. We tapped mid-February, a little later than normal. Cold temperatures held off at the start of the season for most sugar makers in the area. Speaking with a large sugar maker in this state, he said 90% of syrup is made in the month of March. So, I guess we didn't miss much. Colder temperatures are not a bad thing.

As much as I look forward to temps warming up like this past week, we need cold nights and "warm" days. Temperatures in the mid 20's overnight and in the high 30's or low 40's during the day are ideal. With really cold temps, trees and our lines don't thaw out and the sap doesn't run. Or the sap flow starts late in the day only to re-freeze a short time later when the temperatures drop.

Temperatures on the other end of the spectrum are probably more troublesome. Without the freeze/thaw cycle, trees do not build up stem pressure, the sap flow slows and eventually stops. Sap is also affected. If sap sits too long and warms, the sugars begin to convert in form and generally a darker syrup is made with flavor also being affected.

This year the woods have had a good snowpack. That helps keep trees and sap cooler until collected and boiled. Snowpack is dwindling, but every bit helps extend the season.

Technology has crept into our process. We have been using reverse osmosis for several years. This saves time and energy. Reverse osmosis (RO) removes approximately 75% of the water in sap. Boiling the concentrated sap in a wood fired evaporator requires a lot less time and energy to bring it to "syrup". We use about a third of the amount of firewood we used to use, and we can process the sap in far less time.

We have also installed sensors in the woods to monitor pressures in our sap lines and temperatures in the woods. This has helped locate leaks and hopefully increase the amount of sap collected.

All of this has made the process far more manageable. And I am grateful for family and friends. Without their help in the woods and sugar house, the season would not be possible.

Our first boil was this past Sunday, and we have boiled twice since. So far, we have collected 4,600 gallons of sap and made 65 gallons of syrup. By comparison, last year we collected 22,000 gallons of sap in total and made over 500 gallons of syrup. So, we have a little way to go.

We are hoping for the next couple of weeks to bring good sap flow, but if you ask for my prediction for rest of the season...I will tell you what Bill would say, "I'll tell you in May".

Mark Thompson, March 13, 2026

Article 12: Purchase and Upfit Police Vehicle
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $66,000 for the purpose of purchasing and upfitting a new police vehicle and authorize the withdrawal of $30,000 from the Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund created for that purpose. Of the remaining balance, $26,300 is to come from an insurance claim, and $9,700 is to come from unassigned fund balance, no funds to come from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

Selectman Ginger Smith stated that many of you know that our number two cruiser was totaled late last year. We are looking to replace that with a smaller police vehicle than the Chevy Tahoe that we already own. It's going to be a Ford Explorer, a pursuit rated vehicle that will fit in the garage underneath the Police Station. The price is $66,000 with

$30,000 coming from Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund, $26,000 from insurance and $9,700 would come from Fund Balance. We need two vehicles even though we don't have two Police Officers at this time, we hope to very soon.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 13: Full Statistical Revaluation
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $60,000 for the purpose of conducting a Full Statistical Revaluation in order to meet the constitutional and statutory requirement that assessments are at full and true value at least as often as every fifth year, a Full Statistical Revaluation was last performed in 2021, and authorize the withdrawal of $55,000 from the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund established for this purpose. The balance of $5,000 is to come from unassigned fund balance, no amount to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Betsy Villaume.

Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne explained New Hampshire law requires every municipality to bring property assessments to their full and true value at least once every five years. Our last full statistical revaluation was completed in 2021, which means Hancock is legally obligated to complete its next revelation in 2026. This article simply ensures we meet that statutory requirement and remain in full compliance with state assessing standards.

A revaluation is not just a legal requirement - it is an essential tool for fairness. Over time, neighborhoods appreciate at different rates, and market conditions change. The goal of revaluation is to equalize property values across town so that every taxpayer pays only their fair share of the tax burden. The process is thorough and transparent. Certified appraisers analyze two full years of market data, review recent sales, and apply those findings uniformly across all properties. Every property owner receives notice of their new assessment and is offered an opportunity for an informal hearing to review or correct inaccuracies.

It's also important to understand what a revaluation does not do. It does not raise additional revenue for the Town. The total amount raised through taxation remains the same; the revaluation simply redistributes the tax burden fairly based on up-to-date market values.

Financially, this article is straightforward and responsible. The total cost is $60,000. Of that, $55,000 comes from the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund, which taxpayers have been contributing to for this exact purpose. The remaining $5,000 comes from Town's unassigned fund balance. No amount will be raised from taxes.

Approving this article ensures legal compliance, maintains tax equity throughout Hancock, and uses funds already set aside for this purpose.

Stephen Pope stated that this is a statistical revaluation not a physical revaluation. So, to get to David Carney's question (during the Operating Budget article), nobody is going to technically go out and visit the properties to see which new structures happen to appear on some of them. So, the value of the properties won't exactly be correct. How are we going to resolve that?

Selectman Besty Villaume explained that now that we have a Compliance Officer and IF you think your neighbor has more structures on their property then they are being taxed for, just get in touch with the Compliance Officer.
Selectman Laurie Bryan explained that when somebody takes out a building permit, the Building Inspector goes out, checks on it and that is reflected on the tax report. This is one of the ways it is picked up. I have to say this has always been a problem, probably always will be a problem but people do get caught eventually. Building Inspectors, Code Enforcement and these kinds of revaluations help. They DO go out into the neighborhood for a quarterly revaluation.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 14: Post Office Building Lease

Shall the Town of Hancock vote to authorize the Selectboard to enter into and execute on behalf of the Town a lease of the municipal property located at 59 Main Street, Hancock, NH 03449 to United States Postal Service for an initial term of five (5) years, commencing on January 1, 2027 and expiring on December 31, 2031, with an option to renew the lease for an additional five (5) years under terms to be negotiated by the Selectboard; and raise and appropriate the sum of $3,150 for a commission fee to Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Inc. in connection with the negotiation, execution or administration of said lease, this amount to come from unassigned fund balance, no amount to be raised from general taxation; and further authorize the Selectboard to negotiate, finalize, execute and deliver such lease and all related documents and to take all other actions necessary or convenient to implement the foregoing. The Selectboard recommends this article (Majority Vote Required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

Selectman Besty Villaume spoke and explained that previously we have always negotiated directly with USPS on the rental of the Grange building for the Hancock Post Office. The USPS has outsourced lease management to the commercial real estate broker Jones, Lang LaSalle. We have negotiated with them in good faith to keep a few property responsibilities on the Post Office shoulders just as keeping the walkway clear of snow and plowing parking spaces. However, we were unsuccessful at completely eliminating the commission payment, which we had never paid to the Post Office directly. There are annual rent increases built into the lease and I can tell that we spend far less on exterior maintenance on that building than we receive in rental income. The lease term starts on January 1, 2027 runs through December 2031 and there is a five-year option to continue through December 2036.

David Carney asked how much does the Town get for rent payments and what is the ballpark on what we spend.

Selectman Besty Villaume stated that in 2026 the rental income will be $29,245 dollars. In the past couple years, we have spent money on the exterior replacing rotten clapboards etc., it's just a few thousand dollars a year typically.

Doug Cochrane asked, is the Post Office responsible for any upgrades in the interior?

Selectman Besty Villaume responded with typical work to the actual Post Office facility on the interior is their responsibility. They pay utilities and we do maintain the furnace heating system.

Daniel Smith stated that given the situation with the Post Office; closing stations everywhere, scaling back services, delaying things by a day or more in terms of deliveries. As far as the lease goes is it a binding lease and if they close the Post Office does that revenue no longer come from the Grange building?

Selectman Besty Villaume responded with I will have to read through that lease again and let you know.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 15: Establish a Water Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to establish a Water Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of rehabilitating or replacing the Hancock Water Works water distribution and treatment systems and to raise and appropriate the sum of $10,000 to be placed in this fund. Further to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund upon approval of the Board of Water Commissioners. Selectboard and Board of Water Commissioners recommend this article (Majority Vote Required).

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Selectman Betsy Villaume motioned to amend the wording of Article 15.

I move that the Town of Hancock establish a Water Infrastructure Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of rehabilitating or replacing the Hancock Water Works water distribution and treatment systems and to raise and appropriate the sum of $10,000 to be placed in this fund. Further to name the Selectboard as agents to expand from said fund upon approval of the Board of Water Commissioners.

Amendment moved by Besty Villaume and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Moderator Haskins asked for the explanation of the change to the motion.

Selectman Betsy Villaume explained that we are clarifying the name of this Capital Reserve Fund so its intent is clear and it is not confused with an existing fund. The word Infrastructure was added.

The Amendment was voted by voice and passed unanimously.

Selectman Betsy Villaume spoke to the article, first off, all the Hancock Water works Assets are owned by the town and that is everyone of us not just the 200 connections. The Water Works on its own does not have any borrowing capacity nor does it have any bonding authority. If needed the Town borrows the money to make investments which puts the burden of repayment on all property owners. All property owners and residents are subject to consequences of a potential catastrophic failure of the public water supply. The public water supply fills the fire department tankers, water from Norway Pond is also drawn for this purpose. All property owners and residences have access to the town water supply, should their well fail, needing water for themselves, livestock, anyone who lives outside the area currently served by the water works. From the beginning of the water works, the town and individuals loaned and or contributed funds necessary to build out the water supply. This fund is a starting point to building up a balance to address the eventual replacement of the original water mains that come down from Juggernaut Pond.
Those pipes were laid in 1907 and the system is the town's responsibility.

Marcia Kono and Des Ford both asked if $10,000 dollars was enough money to be putting in.

Tom Shevenell responded that the long-range plan essentially requires us to be putting away for annual depreciation of this distribution system on the order of $100,000 a year.
We have come up with a new plan, for the next 20-25 years to put away in the order of $40,000 dollars a year. We will then have sufficient money to be able to start replacing the oldest 1907 pipes. The major replacement comes due in 2057. This is a town asset that goes back to the State Law of 1907. We have been replacing things as we need to and paid by the users. The users are obligated for the operation, maintenance of the regulatory type things such as the lead serve line issue. The replacement has to be a community wide part user, part town wide.

Nathaniel Peirce stated that on the annual report on page 99 there is a Water Department Capital Reserve Fund with a little over $61,000 dollars, what happens with that or is this to be added to that or is it to be totally separate?

Selectman Betsy Villaume explained that is why we changed the name to Infrastructure Capital Reserve Fund. The way the water work fund is set up is in the event that they collect more revenue than they spent on usual maintenance in a year, that difference automatically goes into that Capital Reserve Fund. In the future year they may set their bill rates at "X" and if they have "X+" expenses, they can draw on the fund to pay for them.

David Carney stated that Capital Reserve funds are the best investments the town can make. He motioned to amend the amount to $40,000 dollars. It was seconded by Richard Hum.

The Amendment was voted by voice, and passed, majority vote. The amended motion is now further amended to be $40,000.

Kristen Omlor asked if this is really a re-establishment of this Fund, since it was voted townwide back in the 70's to dissolve it.

Tom Shevenell said that is correct, it was dissolved after they put a ten-year life period on the particular capital reserve fund. We are not putting a time limit on this capital reserve fund.

Sarah Gilliat is concerned about potential privatization of our water supply. Tom Shevenell stated that the Town originally went to the State for permission to operate the water system. State law was crafted and put in place to grant us that right. So, the Town would have to return to the state to have the law changed in order for us to sell this to another entity.

John Rodat, Chair of the CIP Committee, this town has been of late been spending more of its money on reserve funds to help even out the increases in the tax rate. The CIP originally recommended $10,000 but I am gratified with the current motion of $40,000. He mentioned that at the end of the latest CIP report, the Water Works are addressed, "...With respect to the Water Works, we recommend establishing a capital reserve fund for its infrastructure to parallel its reserve for equipment and for unexpected repair needs beyond those budgeted...". He went on to share that the CIP committee feels that further analysis of a number of risks should be undertaken to better serve the community. He is pleased that this closes the loop on establishing capital reserves in place for all of the major assets of the town.

Tom Shevenell added that the Board of Water Commissioners are looking to set up a Water Advisory Committee to help with such long-range plans and technical expertise that can address some of the risks that are mentioned in the CIP report.

The amended motion was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Moderator Haskins left the podium and then passed the gavel to Assistant Moderator David Kidd in order to take a personal break.

Article 16: Bridge Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $10,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance, no amount to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Selectman Besty Villaume stated that with the addition to this Capital Reserve Fund will bring his balance in the account up to $96,000 dollars. In the past few years, we have used large additions to this fund to support the Middle Road Bridge replacement and some larger culverts replacement around town. Having checked with Tyler Howe, $10,000 dollars is an adequate addition to the Bridge Capital Reserve.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 17: Building Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $20,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance, no amount to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

Selectman Besty Villaume added a brief comment that all the buildings in town are getting old, and this building is very old. Adding $20,000 dollars to this Capital Reserve Fund will bring the balance to over $44,000 dollars. We use this fund to address issues that arise outside of planned maintenance, which is run through the Building and Grounds Budget. This

fund is separate from the Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund and is totally separate from the Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 18: DPW Machinery, Equipment and Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $100,000 to be added to the DPW Machinery, Equipment and Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Of this amount $62,000 to come from unassigned fund balance, the remainder of $38,000 to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Selectman Besty Villaume stated that this is an expensive category of assets as we saw earlier in Article 4 for the new dump truck. Adding $100,000 dollars to this Capital Reserve Fund will bring the balance up to $208,000 dollars. This gives us the financial flexibility to respond to catastrophic failures.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 19: Fire Department Vehicle and Related Equipment Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $90,000 to be added to the Fire Department Vehicle and Related Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Of this amount $60,000 to come from unassigned fund balance, the remainder of $30,000 to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

Selectman Betsy Villaume stated that this is the same category of assets as the previous Article, only much more expensive on a per vehicle comparison. Adding $90,000 dollars will bring the balance up to $107,600 dollars. The next vehicle in the replacement cycle, as of the closing of the annual CIP program, is the older tanker T2.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 20: Fire Station Addition and Renovation Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $75,000 to be added to the Fire Station Addition and Renovation CRF previously established. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required.)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

Selectman Betsy Villaume explained that the timing of the commitment paperwork for the USDA regarding the Federal funding to support this important project did not coincide with the date of this meeting. The Select Board continues to support the Fire Department efforts to improve the Fire Station and this additional money to the Capital Reserve Fund will count toward our required matching funds as will last year.

Don Lussier gave a brief update, last year we applied for a Federal Earmark Congressional Directed Spending and we were selected for Federal Earmark and did get approved as part of the Federal Budget. That will provide us with $600,000 dollars with Federal Funding. We will have to jump through all the Federal hoops and we are still waiting for the grant agreement. The Department has been doing a lot of fundraising, the camper that was generally donated by a resident in town raised $25,500 dollars, raffled cordwood raising a little over $4,000 dollars, and community donations of

$28,900 dollars and almost $14,000 dollars for department members. I am grateful for that. That brings us to over $72.000 dollars cash with pledges from members of the community for about another $20,000 dollars. A year from now we are hoping to come back with a larger amount of donations and a final design. If we can find a more cost-effective way to meet all the requirements that we need for additional space, decontamination space, we will do that. The bad news is that the total project cost is going to be higher than we originally hoped when we applied for that Federal Earmark. This may involve some phasing and we are going to make this project as least painful as possible.

Richard Hum stated that the Warrant Article does not appear to have a source for where the $75,000 dollars will come from to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund.

Selectman Betsy Villaume responded that this would come from general taxation.

David Carney motioned to amend the amount to $100,000 dollars.

Moderator Kidd explained that we have a motion from David Carney to raise the amount from 75,000 dollars to $100,000 dollars for the Fire Station Addition and Renovation Capital Reserve Fund. Seconded by Gary Ryer.

Kathy Anderson expressed that she is getting worried, knowing there are people in town who cannot afford their current property taxes.

David Carney explained that the reason for the Amendment is the town needs to submit a portion of the money to get the grant. Long term economic benefits to the taxpayer is to get this fund up so when the Select Board and Fire Department have all their I's and T's dotted, we can start and not stop until it gets done. This would be a safer facility for our Firefighters, they are the heart and blood of the town.

The Amendment was voted by card, and passed, majority vote.

The Amended motion was voted by a show of hands and passed unanimously.

Article 21: Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $10,000 to be added to the Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance, no amount to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommend this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

Selectman Ginger Smith explained that this building really has two parts, the first floor is the Town's and the church has the upper half. The next big project that needs to be done is repairing and painting the steeple and we are looking for LCHIP funds for that. Adding $10,000 dollars to the Capital Reserve Fund will bring the balance up to $26,754 dollars which will help us repair the floor in the entry and a few other things.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 22: Information Technology Expendable Trust Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $5,000 to be added to the Information Technology Expendable Trust Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Betsy Villaume.

Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne explained that we have three computers this year to replace, two for the Town Clerk computers and the Fire Department computer. We use the fund also for emergency situations. We had network equipment damaged by a storm recently, it wiped out our WiFi network that all our committees use for their access to the internet.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Article 23: Road Pavement Expendable Trust Fund
To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $15,000 to be added to the Road Pavement Expendable Trust Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

Selectman Ginger Smith stated that this is a small fund to try to fix small paving issues. Adding $15,000 dollars to the fund will bring the balance to $27,800 dollars.

The question was voted by a show of card votes and passed unanimously.

Assistant Moderator David Kidd then passed the gavel back to Moderator Richard Haskins.

Article 24: Police Equipment Repair/Replacement Special Revenue Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $6,003 for the purpose of repairs and replacement of police equipment with said funds to come from the Police Equipment Repair/Replacement Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1993 town meeting. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Ginger Smith.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously.

Article 25: Recreation Special Revenue Fund
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $4,171 for the purpose of repairs and replacement of recreational facilities with said funds to come from the Recreation Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1993 Town meeting. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed by majority.

Article 26: To Accept Town Reports
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to accept the 2025 reports of the Town Officials, agents and committees, and to accept the 2024 Auditor's report. The Selectboard recommends this article.

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Besty Villaume and seconded by Ginger Smith.

David Carney would like to thank the Selectmen and Jon for putting the town response to the Auditors Report into the report. The only question I have is that for a number of years there seems to be a difference between the auditors and the town on how to deal with pensions. Why are the Auditors telling us, we are not doing it right.

Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne said that the requirement for the full impact for those that have benefits is a GASB requirement. The auditors are required to put that finding in there but a lot of small communities like ours don't have any other post-employment benefits that we offer employees who have retired.

Selectman Betsy Villaume said that when she read the Auditors Report the piece "government activity opinion units" is telling us that we have made appropriate estimates even though they are zero because there is only one person.

David Carney asked if the Town delegates the Conservation Commission to manage recreational easements.

Erik Masterson responded that the Town has a profile of conservation easements, some of them have secondary interest that is held by the Harris Center. The Harris Center is not an enforcement agency.

Selectman Ginger Smith wanted to know if you have "Current Use: Recreation" status on your property who determines that it is actually open for recreation and not closed.

Erik Masterson stated that the only easement in town that he was aware of is the Wolcott Woods easement on Cavender Road that has additional recreation provision in the easement. This is monitored every year to ensure that the terms are being upheld.

David Carney asked if somebody applies for a "Current Use: Recreation" easement what entity in town makes sure that recreational spaces that we are subsidizing by them not paying full property value, is open to people to recreate?

Neal Cass responded that it is the Select Boards responsibility to make sure they are left open. So, any of these are posted recreation and posted No Trespassing, let the board know.

The question was voted by voice and passed unanimously.

The Supervisors of the Checklist have reported that they had 156 voters check-in today.

Article 27: Transact Any Other Business
To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

Des Ford stated that he would like to thank Tyler Howe and his crew for A Job Well Done. Those present, stood and applauded as well.

Kathy Anderson is looking for volunteers with upcoming elections and thanked everyone for the pies and let them know that the proceeds go to the Grapevine.

Moderator Haskins stated at this time, "I will entertain a motion to adjourn the 2026 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting."

Moved by David Carney and Seconded by David Kidd.

Moderator Haskins asked that all those in favor please signify by saying "Yes, Please",
All those Opposed?

The motion was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously.

Moderator Haskins stated that where that motion carried, he declared the 2026 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting to be adjourned!

The 2026 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting closed at 12:53PM.

Swearing-In of newly elected officials by Town Clerk, Joan Joseph, occurred directly after the meeting.

Sincerely,

Joan Joseph
Town Clerk