



GEORGIA VERMONT

2026 Town Budget Informational Meeting Wednesday, January 07, 2026 at 6:00 PM Georgia Fire & Rescue Community Room and via Zoom Minutes

Zoom Details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6165843896?pwd=STduU2JzTmpiVmE1MXZSaWZWLzVadz09>

Meeting ID: 616 584 3896 | Passcode: 5243524

Dial by your Location: 1 929 205 6099 (New York)

1. CALL TO ORDER 6:00PM

SELECTBOARD PRESENT

Chair Kristina Senna, Vice Chair Brian Dunsmore, Kellie Bosenberg, Carl Rosenquist, Judith Nasca

STAFF PRESENT

Doug Bergstrom, Kollene Caspers, Lori Hobart

PUBLIC PRESENT

Ray and Deborah Mann, Terry Cleveland, Heather Dunsmore, Betsy Paret, Daniel Boval, A. Gregoroy Rainville

PUBLIC PRESENT VIA ZOOM

Rachel Becker, Helen Ambridge, Carolyn Branagan, "Papa's i-phone"

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PUBLIC MEETING: 2026 TOWN BUDGET

A. Budget discussion

- The Selectboard presented the draft FY2026 Budget for the Town of Georgia.
- Chair Senna clarified the 2025 Actuals are only draft numbers, as the Town Treasurer is still working on accounting the actual numbers this early in the New Year.
- Chair Senna gave an overview of the proposed 2026 budget, stating there will be a 7.8% increase in expenses from the 2025 budget, giving us a 15.28% increase in revenue to be raised in taxes for FY2026. About half of the difference is the \$197,000 given back to the taxpayers last year. There is also a reduction in the Grand List due to Errors and Omissions found by the new Town Assessor. Most staff in Town received a 3% wage

increase, which included the required wage increase by the State and also the Union Contract requirements. The Town added an additional \$25,000 for law enforcement. Some increases the Selectboard cannot make changes to, such as bridge bond payment and interest, audit, loan payments for the fire station and garage, contracts that have been signed for software and EMS dispatch services, and county taxes.

- Revenue increases will include an increase in zoning fees, new contract with the school, and cell phone tower payments have increased (recovery actions still under attorney review).
- Administrative salary increases include Town Health Officer wages to be in line with other municipalities and the addition of the Town administrator assistant/ZA assistant hours.
- The legal budget has been decreased, but there may be changes based on recent notifications.
- The annual audit has decreased by \$4,000.
- No changes to any set loan payments. There is an increase of \$75,000 for the Bridge #28 Bond payment, some of it is offset by the interest we are earning as the money sits in a money market account until it is needed.
- Most departments are coming in at 1% increase, minus items the Selectboard has approved to add in like the additional paving for the highway and \$35,000 in extraction equipment for the fire and rescue department.
- The library is level funded this year, the reasons for this include a Selectboard focus on essential services. While the library is an important service for the Town, it is not an essential service in terms of the budget. All departments were asked to budget for a 3.5% increase, the library requested over a 12% increase. Over the last 4 years the library has increased their budget 32%, with library salaries the main source of increase at 38%. In 2025 the Selectboard had given \$50,000 to the library for an architectural study and has increased the percentage of impact fee funding. The library has had great success in receiving grant money, and they have more opportunities for grants than other departments.
- The “big ticket” items included in the 2026 proposed budget are an added \$25,000 to law enforcement, \$35,000 for extraction equipment, an increase in \$87,000 towards paving, as well as \$95,000 in Bridge Bond interest and bond payments.
- For a home of about \$300,000, the raise in taxes will be \$250 for the year- for the Town portion only, not the school portion.
- C. Rosenquist addressed the group, reminding the public these numbers are for the Town only. He attended the last school board budget meeting and said the school expenses are up about 3%, and tax rate is approximately an 11% increase. He thanked the Budget committee- Kris Senna, Kellie Bosenberg and Lori Hobart- for all their hard work.
- Chair Senna opened up to the floor to questions from the community:
 - T. Cleveland, general questions on salaries, salary increases and job description for the Town Health Officer.
 - The Administrative “miscellaneous” expenses of \$5,000 are the Vermont Gas E&O payments.
 - Animal Control services will have a higher budget in 2026 due to more animals anticipated, with more care and a more diligent ACO.

- C. Rosenquist explained there was a gift to the Town that helped purchase the new electronic sign. He hopes the public finds the sign and the information advertised helpful. He also highlighted the increased police coverage of \$25,000 in 2026.
- Chair Senna stated there will be a few items on the Ballot for March:
 - Authorization to place any Highway or Fire Department budget monies not spent in the year to automatically go into reserve funds for that department.
 - The Emergency Reserve fund approved in 2022 never explained how to fund the account, so the Selectboard is asking to put a one-time payment of \$50,000 into the reserve fund and determine how it may be funded in the future.
 - The Bridge #28 Bond language was specific to Bridge #28. The current bridge work plan is anticipated to finish at half the cost of the bond. The Town could pay back the half to the bond bank or move the funds to repair Bridge #8 (bridge on Georgia Shore Road near Mill River Road). The Town needs direction to allocate these funds.
 - The Town is asking for an additional \$50,000 for law enforcement as a separate article in the budget.
 - VNA of Southwest Region and Franklin County did get enough signatures to appear on the ballot for \$9,000+. This program replaces Franklin County Home Health care.
 - Town is asking to borrow funds in anticipation of tax payments.
 - Town is again asking to transition from a calendar year to a fiscal year. This will follow the school calendar, so this would be the Town only. State also follows a fiscal year.
 - The above will be for Town Meeting Day. Some will be by Australian ballot; some will be floor votes. Selectboard is still waiting for information from the Town attorney.
 - The change to Fiscal Year will run July 1 through June 30th and line up with the State's fiscal year, VA benefits, grants, and any state funding. In doing so, the Town will not go 2.5 months spending money without approval.
- Betsy Parret questioned line 315 recreation, pool expenses. The Selectboard explained some pool passes are free to request for use at the library, there are two of these family passes. There are also discount coupons at the Town offices that will allow Georgia resident to pay the St. Albans pool rate instead of the nonresident rate. This line item also includes Georgia community events, such as the Memorial Day parade, Gatherings on the Green, Fall Fest and in 2026 the 250th celebration of Vermont.
- T. Cleveland asked if all employees received a 3% wage increase. Chair Senna said yes, all received 3% except the ZA, who had a larger increase due to the additional tasks he's taken on in 2025.
- The salary increase is a requirement in the highway department's contract.
- The Town offers employees an insurance buyout in the amount of \$10,500 in lieu of the Town paying for health insurance if they are eligible elsewhere. This is a requirement in the highway's union contract.
- 2025 actual numbers will be available at Town meeting day, or a few days before.

- Chair Senna said there will be an information session to the public on the change from calendar year to fiscal year before Town meeting day.
- J. Nasca asked what the public's concerns were for the change to fiscal year. Discussion included uncertainty with the change, would the budget run for 18 months, would there be additional tax payment deadlines and how would mortgage escrows be notified.
- D. Mann asked how the structure will change from calendar to fiscal year; will property owners be getting a second tax bill after October? Chair Senna explained it is still to be determined, and the payment increments may change as well, quarterly payments, or monthly payments. Again, this is only the municipal portion of the taxes.
- C. Rosenquist commented on the bridge bond article, costs to the Town is estimated to be half of what was originally anticipated. The primary savings is because the road crew will be doing a bulk of the work instead of hiring contractors. He thinks the savings should go towards the repair of other Town bridges, such as Bridge #8.
- Work to Bridge 28 will be started in the Spring 2026. An archeological study was completed, tree work, culvert purchased and other purchases were made in anticipation of the fix.
- The 104A Bridge was repaired in 2025. No other bridges have been repaired or replaced.
- Dan Bovat asked specifics about the \$750,000 bridge work for Bridge #28. The engineer Tyler Billingsly from East Engineering has more information, but our Town of Georgia road crew labor will save on the costs.
- Reminder: there are many elected and appointed positions still available for service to the Town of Georgia. See the Town website for more information on getting involved in the community.

4. **ADJOURN**

Motion to adjourn at 6:45pm

Motion made by C. Rosenquist, Seconded by Vice Chair Dunsmore

Voting Yea: Chair Senna, Vice Chair Dunsmore, K. Bosenberg, C. Rosenquist, J. Nasca

Agendas are posted to the Town website, four designated places within the Town of Georgia (Town Clerk's Office, Georgia Public Library, Maplefields & Georgia Market), and e-mailed to the local media. Meeting videos are posted on the Town of Georgia website.

Minutes and videos are posted on the Town of Georgia website.

Signed: Stacy Katon, Town Administrator

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