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Called to order at: 6:03 p.m.

**Town of Lincoln**  
**Minutes--Special Town Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 4, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.,**  
**at Burnham Hall, 52 East River Road**

**The legal voters of the Town of Lincoln, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at Burnham Hall on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. to discuss and transact business which may impact our Annual Town Meeting in 2026. *[This meeting is being called as a result of the work done by the Town Meeting Advisory Committee. This committee was appointed by the Selectboard, following Lincoln's 2025 Annual Town Meeting, after the town voters decided to table an article to vote on all money articles by Australian ballot.]***

**Introductions and welcome:**

*Moderator, Paul Forlenza, introduced Selectboard Chair, Tim McGowan, who welcomed everyone and explained that this special meeting was the result of work done by the Town Meeting Advisory Committee, which was appointed by the Selectboard after our 2025 Annual Town Meeting. We are here today, because the Selectboard wants the voters to decide the next steps.*

*Roger "Kudd" Rood was introduced. Kudd acted as spokesperson for the Town Meeting Advisory Committee. Kudd showed a few power point slides, to introduce the committee and give some background about the proposals on the agenda for tonight's meeting. Committee members are Rob Reiber, Chair; Kudd Rood, Vice Chair; Sally Ober, Clerk; Christie Sumner, Lori Atkins, Karen Lueders, and Paul Forlenza. Bill Finger was an ex-officio, non-voting member, and Tim McGowan came to most meetings but was also non-voting. The committee met weekly for many months, before agreeing to the proposed articles, which we are voting on at this meeting.*

*Kudd reviewed a few of the frequently asked questions which came from our four informational meetings leading up to this Town Meeting.*

*Q: How much does a replacement clicker cost? A: \$40*

*Q: Will the Town rent or buy the clicker system? A: Rent to buy. We have 50 days after our rental agreement to apply our rental toward purchasing the equipment.*

*Q: What if the clickers fail? A: We can return to our normal voting methods.*

*Q: What if the voters don't like the clickers? A: The Town can vote to change back to our previous voting methods.*

*Q: Was the committee decision unanimous? A: The committee agreed unanimously, that now is the time to have the Lincoln voters make these decisions.*

*Q: What if the voters decide to use Australian ballot voting for money articles? A: Then renting the clickers will have been a \$3,500 experiment in an alternate voting method.*

*Q: What is the difference between Australian ballot and paper ballot? A: Paper ballot voting is used at floor meetings, when someone requests that the voting be done privately. Paper ballots are usually a spontaneous request. Australian ballots are pre-printed, and can be voted in a voting booth on election day, or by absentee voting, prior to the election day.*

*Christie Sumner introduced Lincoln Ratta, a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade student at Lincoln Community School, who is one of 7 finalists running for Kid Governor in Vermont. Lincoln is here tonight to help run the cordless microphone around for folks who wish to speak.*

*More questions for Kudd:*

*Q: What if the number of people attending a town meeting outnumber the number of clickers we have?*

*A: We are planning to get 200 clickers. A dedicated section of the room would be for people who arrived late after the clicker supply ran out. We would ask those people to vote on paper, and their votes would be added to the clicker total.*

*Q: Is there a school meeting after this town meeting? A: Yes.*

*A point of order was made that the school meeting needs to be recessed and a motion is still not on the floor.*

**Bill Finger made a motion to recess the school district meeting. Seconded by Nancy Stevens. Passed by voice vote.**

*At this time, Moderator, Paul Forlenza, introduced himself and Sally Ober, Town Clerk, and he reviewed the procedures for the meeting.*

**Article 1: Shall the registered voters of the Town of Lincoln [in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2640(b)(1)] vote to start its annual Town Meeting at 10:00 a.m. on the Saturday preceding the first Tuesday in March, beginning with the 2026 Annual Town Meeting?**

**Motion:** *Bill Finger, Second: Dave Venman, Discussion points:*

- 1. Concern was expressed that Saturday mornings have heavy traffic through town with people going to the Transfer Station, General Store, and trips out of town. Perhaps a Saturday morning meeting at 10:00 would be a safety risk to pedestrians.*
- 2. Our Constables could help slow traffic in front of Burnham Hall.*
- 3. The committee's work was applauded, but doubt was expressed that changing the meeting day will increase turnout.*
- 4. Support was spoken for a daytime meeting which would be easier for parents with young children to attend. Childcare would be easier to obtain than on a Monday night.*
- 5. To get more people to vote, it's not necessary to change the meeting day, just adopt Australian ballot voting instead.*
- 6. In-person town meeting is preferred. This parliamentary body makes decisions for those who can't or won't come. The entry to this voting assembly is simple, just register to vote and show up. No campaigning is needed to become a voting member. This is democracy at its best.*
- 7. The Selectboard is planning to put Australian ballot voting on the warning again for the next annual meeting.*
- 8. Q: Is it legal to move the day of our annual meeting? A: Yes.*

9. *We won't know if this change would help with voter turnout unless we try it.*
10. *A long meeting on a Saturday, sounds easier to endure than a late-night meeting on a Monday.*
11. *Q: Could we offer childcare for Town Meeting? A: We always do. Contact your town clerk to sign up. The invitation and phone number are printed on the front cover of our town report.*
12. *Q: What happened to the hybrid town meeting idea, where we have an in-person meeting to tell the Selectboard what to put on the warning, then we vote by Australian ballot for the final decision? A: The Town Meeting Advisory Committee started working toward this concept but then shifted to a broader view. It was decided not to take this middle step until after the voters re-consider the Australian ballot voting question in the spring.*
13. *Clickers would allow people at a meeting to vote privately, and this would be a step toward modernizing town meeting.*
14. *If we pass this, our 2026 Annual Town Meeting would fall on Feb. 28, which is part of the school break period, and some families may already have plans to be away.*

**Robert Fuller made a motion to amend Article 1, by changing the meeting time from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. instead. Seconded by Bill Finger. Discussion:**

1. *It would allow people to go to the dump before the meeting.*
2. *Concern was expressed that this is too late in the day. People would likely get busy with their Saturday activities and skip coming to the meeting, defeating the goal of drawing more people in. If we do it in the morning, we can finish the meeting then have time to do things in the afternoon.*

***Vote on the amendment failed by voice vote. Back to the main motion....***

*Q: Could we choose a different Saturday, so it doesn't conflict with school vacation? A: No.*

***Steve Harris made a motion to call the question, which passed by voice vote.***

**Article 1 passed as warned by voice vote.**

**Article 2: Shall the registered voters of the Town of Lincoln [in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2658] vote to use an electronic voting system as the voting procedure at floor town meetings (beginning in 2026), and authorize the Selectboard to rent/buy the electronic voting system?**

**Motion: Christie Sumner, Second: Kate McGowan Discussion points:**

1. *Not in favor of this. It doesn't seem like it would make a difference in voter turnout. Australian ballot voting is usually more like 40-50% turnout, which would be better.*
2. *Clarification of rent/buy? It means the Selectboard will likely rent the clickers for 2026 to see if we like using them. Then if it goes well, we can put the rental fee toward purchasing the clickers, if we decide to do so within 50 days of signing the rental agreement.*
3. *Opposed to this because it seems like an excessive amount of spending for a little time savings and other possible advantages.*
4. *Concern about technology obsolescence and would like to see this money spent another way.*
5. *Clickers would help with both privacy and accuracy of the vote count, and the price seems worth it for these improvements on our voting.*

6. *We will need to continue to modernize our voting procedures, and we can summon a willingness to do so.*
7. *Preference for traditional voting procedures. Hearing voices is better than clicking.*

**Mike Fisher made a motion to strike the wording of this whole motion and replace it with the School Board Article 2 wording, about when to use clickers. Seconded by Rob Backlund. This would change Article 2 to read:**

***Shall the registered voters of the Town of Lincoln [in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2658] vote to change its procedure from paper balloting to the use of an electronic voting system, to be used when the moderator's declaration of votes taken from the floor is questioned at a meeting?***

**Discussion points about the amendment:**

1. *Anyone can call for a paper ballot, but we shouldn't use clickers for every vote.*
2. *The school district article was worded by their attorney. School legislation does not directly address what we are trying to do, so this was their suggestion, which seems to align with 17 V.S.A. § 2658 better.*
3. *It seems that we need to keep the part about authorizing the Selectboard to purchase the system.*
4. *The Town Meeting Advisory Committee invited an attorney from the VT Secretary of State's Office, and he said we could vote to use clickers this way if the voters approve.*

**Barbara Thompson-Snow made a motion to amend the amendment, striking back to the original motion, but changing it to read "a" voting procedure instead of "the" voting procedure. Seconded by Dave Venman.**

***This change would read: Shall the registered voters of the Town of Lincoln [in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2658] vote to use an electronic voting system as a voting procedure at floor town meetings (beginning in 2026), and authorize the Selectboard to rent/buy the electronic system?***

**Discussion:**

1. *Concern about the expense of the electronic system. What's the rush. Let's see if Saturday meetings help boost attendance, first. There is no cost for making that change.*
2. *There is a rush to making this change; we don't want to sit through 5-hour meetings. Try the experiment for \$3,500!*

***Will Sipsev made a motion to call the question. Passed by voice vote.***

***Voting on Barbara Thompson-Snow's [secondary] amendment, passed by voice vote.***

***Back to the primary amendment as amended. Dave Venman made a motion to call the question.***

***Passed by voice vote.***

***Voting on the primary amendment as amended, passed by voice vote.***

***Back to the main motion as amended, which now reads:***

***Shall the registered voters of the Town of Lincoln [in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2658] vote to use an electronic voting system as a voting procedure at floor town meetings (beginning in 2026), and authorize the Selectboard to rent/buy the electronic system?***

***Ed Clark made a motion to call the question. Passed by voice vote.***

***Main motion as amended was voted on by voice and the Moderator deemed it unclear.***

**Article 2 passed as amended by division of the house: 100 YES votes and 21 NO votes.**

**Article 3: To transact any other legal and proper business when met.**

*Christie Sumner thanked Lincoln Ratta, for being our microphone runner and wished him well with his campaign for VT Kid Governor.*

**ADJOURNED:** *at 7:43 p.m.*

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Sally Ober, Town Clerk*

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*Minutes approved by Paul Forlenza, Moderator*

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*Minutes approved by Tim McGowan, Selectboard Chair*

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