



GEORGIA VERMONT

Town and School Meeting Tuesday, March 4, 2025, 10:00 a.m. Minutes

School Meeting

Present: Ben Chiappinelli, Grady Ballard, and Steve Wry

Absent: Carl Laroe and Kate Barnes

Cheryl Letourneau, Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER by Moderator Carolyn Branagan

Carolyn Branagan opened reading the announcements and introduced our representatives.

Georgia Boy Scouts led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ashley Bartley spoke briefly regarding what is happening in the state house.

Carolyn Branagan read the school warning:

Article 1: Shall the legal voters of said school district elect the following officers?

BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

- School Moderator for a one-year term
- School Director for a three-year term
- School Director for a one-year term
- School Director for a one-year term

Article 2: Shall the voters of said school district approve the school board to expend. **\$18,545,403** which is the amount the school board has determined necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?

The Georgia Town School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per-pupil education spending of \$14,942.66, which is 14.58% higher than per-pupil education spending for the current year.

BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

Article 3: Shall the voters of said school district authorize the School Directors to borrow money for school expenses in anticipation of revenue for the ensuing year?

BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

Article 4: Shall the reports of the School Directors concerning the previous year be accepted? Motion to move article by Suzanna Brown, seconded by Christine Orellana. Ayes have it.

34 **Article 5:** Shall any other legal business come before said meeting? Suzanna Brown would like to see the
35 Electronic Sign at the school be used for more than just school announcements.

36 **There was no discussion on articles 1-3 for the school board from the public.**

37 **10:23 School Meeting adjourned.**

38 **Town Meeting**

39 **10:25 a.m.**

40 Present: Carl Rosenquist, Kristina Senna, and Brian Dunsmore

41 Absent: Paul Jansen

42 Staff: Lori Hobart Treasurer and Cheryl Letourneau Town Clerk

43 Carolyn Branagan read the town warning and informed the public of two typographical errors.

44 Article 1: To hear and act on reports submitted by Town Officers. Suzanna Brown made a motion to
45 discuss article 1, seconded by Diane Duranleau.

46 Ken Minck spoke of errors on page six, Jen Kale's term ending should be 2026 and Ken Minck's term
47 should end 2028.

48 Noah Lavalley had questions regarding the budget amount for police coverage. His concern was the
49 increased budget of \$100,000 and we are only getting 20 hours of coverage. He felt this money could
50 be used on other projects, like the bridge on Mill River Rd.

51 Kim Asch would like to know if the conflicts in the town audit have been resolved and if so how. K.
52 Senna explained they acknowledge the conflicts and changes are being made at this time to correct
53 them.

54 Suzanna Brown wanted to thank everyone that has served on the town boards and how disappointed
55 she was to see how many openings we had.

56 Gary Wright commented, social media is the reason for so many openings. People do not want to be
57 attacked on social media by keyboard warriors.

58 Noah Lavalley wanted to know the status of the cell tower overpayment. K. Senna explained we are
59 still in negotiations and are waiting to hear back from American Tower.

60 Ken Minck would like to see a breakdown of the Admin Reserve Fund. L. Hobart replied that she had
61 already sent an email to Ken with that information. K. Senna asked Ken if he had received the email he
62 had.

63 Suzanna Brown said people should read the whole town report to see what is happening in town.

64 Craig Volatile-Wood would like to know the status of the bridge on Mill River Rd. K. Senna responded
65 that the state has required an archaeological dig before the town can proceed with the project.

Article 2: Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, by delivery to the town hall postmarked on or before that date? Jacqui Hood so moved; Ellen Hsieh seconded the motion.

Kelly Bosenberg asked if the town had to borrow funds because of only receiving tax money in October. K. Senna replied to it had been a problem in the past but because of ARPA funding we have not had that issue. Kelly Bosenberg, but the ARPA funds have now been exhausted. K. Senna reported not having spent all the ARPA funds, they are now in a work force retention/project funding account. We do not anticipate having to borrow any money. All In favor of the motion; ayes have it.

Article 3: Shall the voters elect one Director to the Georgia Industrial Development Corporation, for a period of three years? Carl Rosenquist nominated Jim Driver for the three-year term on GIDC. All in favor. Ayes agree.

Article 4: Shall the voters authorize the purchase of a new fire truck, not to exceed \$1.6 million dollars with financing options? Motion so moved by Jamie Cota, seconded by Jacqui Hood. Chief Keith Baker informed the voters of why we need this arial ladder truck and how it would be paid for. Inserted is Chief Bakers report.



Georgia Fire and Rescue

4134 Ethan Allen Highway • Georgia, VT 05478 • Phone: 802-782-8045

Email: firechief@townofgeorgia.com

In 2024, the Georgia Fire and Rescue Department was dispatched to a total of 417 Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls as compared to 439 last year. Members of the Department also spent over 2500 hours training, preparing for emergencies, and maintaining the apparatus, station, and equipment. We welcomed two new members to the Department: Nichole Marden as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Caton Lawrence as a Cadet. Former member, Gilles Rainville Sr., passed away in September. We thank him for his previous years of service and his family is in our thoughts. In October, Jim Bryce also passed away. Jim was a very generous supporter of our Fire and Rescue Department, donating the current building and providing a crew to build it. He also continued significant donations of time and materials to maintain the station over the years. His generosity is greatly appreciated by the members of this Department.

This year, the Town will have a new Capital Budget for the next 5 years. In the Fire and Rescue portion of the Capital Budget you will see in 2029 the replacement of our current ladder truck at an estimated cost of 1.6 million dollars. The current truck will be 24 years old in 2029. I bring this to your attention primarily due to the cost as fire trucks have gone up by about 40 percent in the last 4 years. While they are leveling off some, it is not anticipated that they will ever go back down. A new ladder truck is 4 years out from when ordered. In 2021, we purchased the current truck from the St. Albans Town Fire Department with the expectation of replacing this truck in 2029 as presented. We normally replace our trucks at 20 years old when purchased new. NFPA 1901 recommends aerial apparatus to be replaced by 25 years of service. If we were to go back to a fire engine instead of a

ladder truck the estimated cost would be nearly 1.2 million dollars. While the cost of the ladder truck is way more than we would have originally projected when we purchased the current truck, we have been able to be creative in how to fund the new truck with minimal taxpayer increase. We estimate the increase to be \$39,600 per year more to finance the truck for the 5 years than what would be currently paid at the time of purchase for fire department expenses. That equates to about \$8 per resident per year for a 1.6 million dollar purchase. This would also allow for the reserve funds that we normally put in yearly for fire apparatus to continue during the 5 years the truck is financed allowing for significant funds to be in place for the next truck (a tanker) that would be due in 2034. Currently the fire engine, two tankers, and the ladder truck are all planned as 20-year replacements with each purchase currently spaced 5 years apart. Each truck has been financed over 5-year periods, so we only ever have financing occurring for one truck at a time.

Why a ladder truck versus a fire engine and what are the differences? The ladder truck has a 75' ladder on the top of the truck and carries three other ladders not carried on a fire engine. The additional ladders are two 16' roof ladders (3 total) and a 35' extension ladder which is used as a secondary means of egress from a third story window or a two-story building with a walkout basement. The ladder truck has the ability of an elevated aerial water pipe or master stream. The ladder truck carries additional firefighting fans and saws. Both types of trucks carry similar amounts of hose. The ladder truck has an increased pump capacity versus a fire engine. The 75' ladder has multiple other rescue capabilities outside of traditional building fire uses. Probably one of the biggest reasons for owning a ladder truck is increased firefighter safety. The aerial ladder allows firefighters to work on roofs or elevated surfaces without using traditional ground ladders that are less safe while working on a roof. The ladder can be set up by one person in less than two minutes. Since going into service in Georgia in July of 2021, our ladder truck has responded to 80 incidents with 17 of them being building fires. Our ladder truck is the first truck to respond to all building related incidents. The cons of the new ladder truck are 250 gallons less water compared to our fire engine but the same as our current ladder truck and the increased cost of the truck. The added cost gives us significant advantages in ability over a fire engine. Lastly, we follow the used fire apparatus market closely and feel the new truck is the most cost-effective purchase over its 20-year life. Currently, used ladder trucks are typically 15 years old or older and a decent one is around \$500,000. This gives you 5-7 years of use. In the 20 years we would purchase 3 or more ladder trucks, which would cost more than the new truck. This would be due to cost increases in purchase prices of trucks over the years. Also, there would likely be increased cost of ownership with the used trucks as they all would be older trucks when purchased, increasing the likelihood of higher maintenance costs. We believe adding the ladder truck capability has been a success to this point and will keep us prepared for the increased growth of the Town in the future. We would appreciate your support to continue this capability.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a Firefighter, Cadet (ages 14-17), or an Emergency Medical Services provider, please reach out to any member or email firechief@townofgeorgia.com for details.

I would like to thank all our members for their continued dedication and service to the Fire and Rescue Department and the citizens and visitors of the Town of Georgia. I would also like to thank their families for their continued support and the residents for your continued support.

Respectfully,

Keith Baker, Fire Chief

Jacqui Hood asked if we pass on this are we guarantee this price at the time we sign the contract, so it will not go up in the next 5 years, before we get the truck. Keith Baker believes so.

Fred Grimm asked if the report says \$8.00 per person does that mean \$24.00 per household if you have three people living there. Chief Baker replied yes.

163 Fred Grimm asked if the ladder truck went to seven structure fires, did the arial ladder get deployed
164 seven times? Chief Baker replied not having the number of times the arial ladder was deployed. He said
165 it was deployed often. It was used at a chimney fire a few days prior to the town meeting.

166 Shawna Shuttle wondered if the truck was funded partly by a federal grant. Chief Keith Baker replied to
167 no.

168 Ken Minck asked why this was being brought to the voters if it was already part of the approved capital
169 budget. K. Senna replied, saying they are doing this under the advice of legal counsel because they did
170 not want to burden a future board with a payment that was not discussed with the voters.

171 Ken Minck would like to amend the motion for Article 4 as it has already been approved in the Capital
172 Budget for 2029. He would like to add 2029 to the end of the article. Diane Duranleau seconded.
173 Discussion is had and Ken withdraws this motion.

174 Ken Minck makes a motion to amend Article 4 to include financing not to exceed 5 years upon delivery.
175 Mari Jo Hanbury seconds the motion.

176 Jake Whitley asked what steps are in place to hold the price given. K. Senna responded, saying the
177 signed contract holds that into place.

178 Bill Ryder said this purchase will tie the hands of the future selectboard.

179 Fred Gimm asked what the increase be to the taxes? K. Senna replied to next year there will be \$0. The
180 payments do not start until 2029 and there is a plan to build up the reserve fund and pay off one
181 vehicle at a time.

182 Therese Cleveland asked if we have a truck to sell, that will go towards this truck. K. Senna responded
183 that it had already been figured into the cost of the truck.

184 Suzanna Brown called for a vote on the amendment.

185 Amendment called, ayes have it.

186 Ken Minck asked if voters approve \$ 1.6 million today what effect does that have on the budget in
187 2029. K. Senna responded saying grants and other funding will help with the cost of the truck.

188 Kim Asch asked what happens if we do not buy a new truck? Chief Baker responded that we would
189 have a 20-year-old truck. It is up to the town to decide.

190 Kim Asch asked if this is a planned equipment upgrade. K. Senna confirmed this to be correct.

191 Colin Conger, Thank you to the Fire Department. We owe it to our heroes to have proper equipment for
192 the safety of the staff.

193 Moderator called for vote of article 4. Ayes have it.

194 Article 5

195 Valerie Keller thanked the Selectboard, commented on all articles being on Australian Ballot. She also
196 said the library is underfunded and there are not enough activities for kids and families.

197 Chief Keith Baker thanked everyone for their support and acknowledged Gary Baker's 50 years of
198 service.

199 Dr. Chiappinelli said the Jimmy Center has after-school activities and teen nights plus other events.

200 Jacqui Hood said they have a group called 100 Women Who Care and welcomed people to get involved
201 with her.

202 Heather Grimm said the Scouts have many opportunities for activities.

203 Tom Hargy thanked everyone for using the town trails.

204 K. Senna thanked all the town employees and recognized Carl Rosenquist for all he had done.

205 11:50 a.m. the meeting was adjourned.

206

207 **13. ADJOURN**

208

209 **Posted to the Town website, four designated places within the Town of Georgia, Town Clerk's**
210 **Office, Georgia Public Library, Maplefields & Georgia Market.**

211 **Phone: 802-524-3524 | Fax: 802-524-3543 | Website: townofgeorgia.com**