

Town of Orange, Vermont
Special Selectboard Budget Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2026

1. Call to Order

Steve Simpson called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

2. Attendance

Selectboard Members: Steve Simpson (Chair), Kristin Paya (Vice Chair), Carmella Tucker

Also Present: Diane Hallenbeck, Nate Choge, John McNeil

3. Approval of Agenda

Carmella moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Kristin. All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Public Comment

Nate Choge expressed appreciation and thanked the board.

5. Budget Discussion

Carmella reported she has been working with John to reconcile discrepancies between current and prior financial records; no significant concerns were identified. The board reviewed budget line items in detail. Steve recommended including date/time stamps and page numbers on drafts.

Facilities & Capital Needs:

Fuel tank removal at the Clerk's Office and Town Hall (both sides) estimated at \$10,000, not including contamination if found. Clerk's Office roof may have plywood damage; metal roofing materials are already on hand. MERP grant totals approximately \$402,000 for energy-related improvements, with \$26,000 each allocated to Town Hall and the Clerk's Office for uncovered items (e.g., exterior work). Carmella will research a capital improvement plan for Town Hall. The board recommended deferring additional capital improvements this year due to existing investments.

Mowing:

Per the December 8 decision, the Town will cover mowing, electricity, and insurance for the Recreation Field. Mowing may be bid jointly, with the Cemetery paying its share.

6. Highway Department

The budget has been reduced.

Tucker Road: Clarification needed on eligible expenses (paving vs. additional work). Use of in-kind labor discussed. Steve will follow up with Michelle Redman.

Other Items:

Lord's Bridge grant has been extended to 2027; project needs review.

Equipment:

Discussion included repairing the existing grader vs. leasing new (7-year term), replacing or trading older trucks, and financing options (Bond Bank vs. higher-interest alternatives). The board recommended clearly tracking owned vs. financed equipment and repair/maintenance costs. A prior truck purchase totaled \$40,000, with \$20,000 grant funded.

Budget Adjustments:

A discrepancy was noted: \$32,000 listed vs. \$20,000 voter approved. Adjustment needed; possible misallocation from \$12,000 in roadside mowing carryforward funds.

7. FEMA Reimbursements

Clarification needed on total reimbursements received for 2023 and 2024.

8. Next Steps

Finalize budget for vote on Monday.

9. Executive Session

At 8:16 PM, Steve Simpson requested entry into executive session for a personnel matter pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313. Motion by Kristin, seconded by Carmella. All in favor. Motion carried.

10. Adjournment

At 9:10 PM, Kristin moved to adjourn, seconded by Steve. No action taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Hallenbeck, Town Clerk