

TOWN OF ALTON
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING DELIBERATIVE SESSION
MAY 5, 2026
PROSPECT MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL

Town Moderator, Gene Young, welcomed 77 voters to the 2026 Special Town Meeting Deliberative Session at 6:05 pm.

All in attendance rose to Pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and observed a moment of silence.

Moderator Young reminded everyone voting to make sure they had a voters card. He stated copies of the warrant and Moderator's Rules are available in the back of the room and noted he would not be reading the rules since they are the same rules that have been followed for a number of years. He asked for any questions about the rules, hearing none he moved on to the introduction of the head table.

Board of Selectmen:

Paul LaRochelle, Chairman
Andrew Morse, Selectman
Drew Carter, Selectman
Jack Sleeper, Selectman
Richard Shea, Selectman

Ryan Heath, Town Administrator
Michael Malaguti, Town Attorney
Laura Parker, Finance Manager

Budget Committee:

Elizabeth Varney, Chairman
Jill Houser, Member
Thomas Diveny, Member

Jennifer Collins, Town Clerk
Carol Long, Recording Secretary

Supervisors of the Checklist:

Valerie Tarbell
Katherine Carpentier
Lisa Keller

Moderator Young read the Special Town Meeting Warrant. To the inhabitants of the Town of Alton qualified to vote in Town affairs are hereby notified that the special meeting will be held as follows to act upon the following article: First session of special meeting, the deliberative session May 5, 2026 at 6:00 PM at Prospect Mountain High School. Second session of special meeting, official ballot voting June 6, 2026 7:00 am to 7:00 pm in the gymnasium of Prospect Mountain High School.

Moderator Young asked if there were any questions regarding the rules. Hearing none he moved on the reading of the article.

Article # 1: Revised Operating Budget

Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$10,222,064. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$9,795,561, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law. Recommended by

the Selectmen (5-0-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (5-1-0). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$4.53)

Elizabeth Varney moved Article 1, seconded by Thomas Diveny.

Paul LaRochelle stated the department heads worked hard making cuts necessary to bring forward a reduced operating budget; mostly from Fire Department, Police Department and Department of Public Works. He encouraged people to come up and ask any questions they may have.

Loring Carr said he calculated a difference of \$426,503 which includes the assessing revaluation. After the revaluation is deducted, the increase is \$309,923 for 3% raises and other incidentals. He asked for the exact amount of the raises.

Paul LaRochelle clarified the budget includes a 4% raise for employees.

Loring Carr thought the budget committee approved a 3% raise. He asked for the dollar amount of the raises.

Paul LaRochelle answered the raises total \$309,923 less the \$90,000 for the additional firefighter.

Robert Butler questioned what the annual rate of budget increase has been for the last ten years.

Cydney Shapleigh encouraged people to make their decision based on facts not facebook. She stated if the revised budget passes the overall tax impact will be \$0.19. She reviewed some prior tax rates and statistics: In 2015 the tax rate was \$14.27; in 2020 it was \$13.95 which is a 2.24% decrease from 2015; in 2025 it was \$13.50 which is a 3.22% decrease from 2020. She explained that the rate went up and down over the past ten years, however the overall increase from 2015 to 2025 is 5.37%. She added that social security has gone up cumulatively 31.7% in the same ten year period. The biggest decreases in this revised budget are coming from the three main departments, police, fire and public works, all of which impact safety which hurts everyone.

Moderator Young clarified that the tax rate figures include the school, county and state taxes, not just the town.

Steve Lydon spoke regarding the impact being in year three of a default budget is having on public safety. He spoke primarily to the funding of the fire, police and public works departments and encouraged the budget committee to look closely at how the overall budget is presented and explained to the taxpayers. He added that the outcome of emergencies like house fires, medical emergencies and motor vehicle accidents depend greatly on how quickly crews arrive. He stated adequate staffing requires adequate funding. He encouraged the budget committee to reconsider their position and change the proposed budget to include all four firefighter positions instead of only three that were added in last years warrant article.

Andrea Caruso said people do not understand the numbers given to them and the true tax impact. She stated the town needs to do a better job educating the public in layman terms that they can understand.

Moderator Young asked for any further comments. Seeing none he moved to a vote to put the article on the ballot as written. With a show of cards the article passed.

Moderator Young adjourned the meeting at 6:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Long
Recording Secretary