

# Jamaica Select Board Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

Meeting of Dec 8th, 2025

## Meeting Details

<b>Date</b>	12/8/25
<b>Board Members Present</b>	Jessica Pollack (Chair), Kate Ullman (Vice Chair), Greg Meulemans, Christina Robinson
<b>Public Attendees</b>	Karen Ameden, Paul Fraser

## Call to Order

Jessica called the meeting to order at 7:00 AM.

## Late Additions

Discussion included the cancelling of a second meeting for the month.

## Approval of Minutes

Jessica made a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Kate seconded the motion. All were in favor, except Jessica who abstained.

## Schedule Budget Meeting

Jessica recommended scheduling the budget meeting for Wednesday, January 7th at 5:00 PM. Additionally, Wednesday the 21st at 5:00 PM was proposed, with the option to hold a quick Zoom meeting if other topics arise.

A motion was made to cancel the December 22nd meeting. Kate seconded, and all were in favor.

## Phones

Tom has been working on implementing a new cloud-based phone system in collaboration with Vonage. The system design ensures all town operations are accessible via a single number, featuring a phone tree menu for directing calls. Both the Jamaica Volunteer Fire

Department and the Library approved this setup. The anticipated annual cost savings are \$2,772, with rollout planned for January. See Appendix A

Jessica made a motion to proceed, which Greg seconded. All members were in favor.

## Review Winter Operations Policy

Greg sent out a reminder regarding the town's winter operations policy. The town does not maintain a bare road policy. Residents are reminded not to park in the Right of Way, and there is no overnight parking permitted on Route 30. The town sand pile is available to residents by appointment; those interested should contact the Town Clerk or Town Garage to schedule. See Appendix C

Jessica made a motion to approve the policy. Kate seconded, and all were in favor.

## Cemetery Tree Removal Bids

No bids to open tonight.

## Town Plan Hearing

Tomorrow, there will be the hearing at 6:00 PM and then a Special Select board meeting at 7:00 PM for approval.

## Insurance Requirement for Town Hall

Tom has been researching ways to make Town Hall more accessible, focusing on insurance requirements for events. The town holds \$10 million liability policies on its buildings. After consulting with Wardsboro, Tom found that supplemental insurance is only required if alcohol is present at one of their events. VLCT identified additional risks and provided Tom with a risk matrix. He is working on a questionnaire to determine whether supplemental insurance is necessary. Tom is continuing his research, emphasizing the importance of making Town Hall accessible to residents who may not be able to afford supplemental insurance.

## Update on JVS Carrying Costs and Vote Timing Decision

A spreadsheet outlining operating costs for JVS was reviewed. Last year, the building was used only for pre-K and meetings, according to Greg Snow. If the board votes to close the school and buy it back, Jessica believes pre-K will likely not operate there next year. Board members discussed the need to inform residents about operating costs, estimated to be in the low \$30,000s, with this year's cost at \$27,000 and projections ranging from \$26,000 to \$35,000. Plowing the parking lot would still be required. See Appendix B

Karen asked who indicated there would be no classes next year. Mr. Snow explained that if the school is closed, classes would cease. Karen noted that if the town does not close the school, classes should continue there.

Greg mentioned hearing that pre-K for three-year-olds might be discontinued. Karen added that closing the building would eliminate pre-K for three-year-olds in the district.

Karen stated the situation is complicated due to the state's involvement. One proposal is to retain Leland & Gray Middle and High School, which is in a good geographic location, while another proposal suggests eliminating neighboring towns to increase enrollment. Drew Hazelton confirmed that there is nothing on the school board's agenda regarding this issue. Because no formal plan exists, Karen questioned the urgency. Jessica reported receiving emails from Bob Thibault, with Mr. Hazelton CC'd, asking for updates on whether the board wishes to call a vote.

The legislative session begins in January. Last year, the taskforce failed to deliver recommendations, as Governor Scott noted. There is a possibility that redistricting will be addressed in the upcoming session. The board discussed whether to let the town decide on the future of Jamaica Village School now.

Jessica explained that if no vote is called, future decisions will be made when articles are decided, which could result in loss of control over the real estate.

Karen expressed disbelief that the new district would not return the property. Jessica expressed skepticism. Greg noted that consolidating schools would generate significant savings, not simply closing individual schools. Christina advocated for retaining control over the building.

Karen recommended inviting the two Jamaica school board members to participate in future discussions before making a decision.

Kate remarked that no one in Jamaica wants to close pre-K for three-year-olds in the district, and Karen reiterated that there is no need to rush the decision.

The board acknowledged that a \$30,000 budget swing would not significantly impact overall budgeting decisions.

Greg made a motion to table the discussion, which Jessica seconded. The vote was split 2-2, so the motion failed.

Jessica then made a motion to invite school board members to a special meeting to discuss the impact of the vote on pre-K, as well as their perspectives and other relevant considerations. Greg seconded, and all were in favor.

## Review and Approve Timesheets

Jessica made a motion to approve the timesheets, which Kate seconded. All were in favor.

## Review and Approve Pay Orders

Jessica made a motion to approve the pay orders, which Kate seconded. All were in favor.

## Public Concerns and Announcements

Paul raised a question regarding the school board meeting, suggesting it may be beneficial to invite someone from Montpelier, such as Laura Sibia, who has extensive information on her website.

Jessica agreed to reach out to Laura Sibia.

Paul requested that the upcoming meeting include a dialogue and discussion.

Karen –

Santa Clause visited town over the weekend, with donations from Library West River Provisions, Jamaica Haus, River and Rye, Eastern Star, and Mason. This event has been a tradition since 1986.

Monday group fitness classes are held at 5:30 PM with Tom Glass at Town Hall.

The Jamaica run/walk club meets across the street at 5:00 PM.

On Thursday, December 11th, there will be an River & Rye silent book club meeting.

The Jamaica Holiday Fair takes place December 13th and 14th, from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM at Jamaica Town Hall.

There will be no yoga this weekend. A Winter Solstice Yoga Retreat will be held at River and Rye on December 21st and 22nd.

Crafters meet at Jamaica Haus on Wednesdays at 6:00 PM.

The tree lighting event is scheduled on the town green for Sunday at 5:00 PM, followed by refreshments at River and Rye featuring latkes.

Karen requested approval to place a menorah on Town Green. Jessica confirmed that board supports the installation.

## Executive Session

No executive session was held.

## Adjournment

Jessica made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Christina seconded. All were in favor.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:58 PM.

## Appendix A

Phone costs for new system

	Current	Proposed		Comments
Internet Town Office	\$ 2.00	\$ 100.00		Would Increase bandwidth
Internet Town Hall	\$ 71.95	\$ 4.00		Switch to free
Internet at Library	\$ 2.00	\$ 4.00		Free
Internet at Transfer Station	\$ -	\$ 71.95		Add connection at Transfer station
Internet Town Garage	\$ 71.95	\$ 71.95		
Phone lines	\$ 750.00	\$ 150.00		Keep "Paul's extra line" for emergencies
Vonage		\$ 255.00		10 phones
Fax Town Office		\$ 9.99		Town Office Library (eFax)
Monthly Costs	\$ 897.90	\$ 666.89	\$ 231.01	
Yearly Costs	\$ 10,774.80	\$ 8,002.68	\$ 2,772.12	

## Appendix B

Costs to Maintain Jamaica Village School

JVS Operating Costs						
	FY24 Budgeted	FY24 Actual	FY25 Budgeted	FY25 Actual	FY26 Budgeted	FY26 Actual (as of Nov 25)
Electricity	\$8,500.00	\$4,206.00	\$7,500.00	\$5,243.00	\$6,000.00	\$2,253.00
Heating Oil	\$11,000.00	\$13,952.00	\$19,000.00	\$14,167.00	\$14,000.00	\$5,397.00
Water Testing	\$4,800.00	\$2,015.00	\$4,800.00	\$2,800.00	\$2,800.00	\$1,200.00
Snow Removal	\$3,000.00	\$9,875.00	\$3,000.00	\$9,875.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Maint misc. (Annual Generator maint, Alliance (HVAC controls and Preventative maintenance)	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00
TOTAL	\$30,800.00	\$33,548.00	\$37,800.00	\$35,585.00	\$26,300.00	\$12,350.00

## Appendix C

# Town of Jamaica ~ 25/26 Winter Operations Policy

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of an accepted winter operations policy is to define the scope of procedures for snow and ice control and removal. The primary objective with winter operations is to maintain the safety and mobility of the traveling public. Although financial limitations ultimately affect the level of service that is provided, every effort will be made to provide safe roadway conditions as soon as possible with available resources (budget, personnel, equipment and materials). Storms vary dramatically with regards to precipitation, prediction, timing as well as elevation. The Highway Department will coordinate operations to fit each event. This plan is intended as a guide for “average” conditions.

### **General:**

During the winter period extending from November 1 to April 30, the Highway Department’s main principal is controlling snow and ice on approx. 50 miles of road. A prioritization of roads has been established to address winter maintenance. Resource limitations do not allow for 24 hour continuous winter maintenance service during storm events. Best management practices limit employee plowing hours. There may be a reduction or absence of winter maintenance between the hours of 10:00 PM and 4:00 AM.

The Highway Department strive to keep roads safe for the traveling public, however, the Town, as well as the State of Vermont, **does not** have a “**bare roads**” policy. Roads may be snow covered during and following storm events. Adverse driving conditions are to be expected and motor vehicle operators must be prepared for such. The following is a list of actions (provided by VTrans) that drivers should adhere to in order to accommodate safe winter driving:

1. Slow down. Driving too fast on wintry roads is the leading cause of crashes.
2. Travel at a safe distance. Allow at least 3 car lengths in order to leave plenty of room to stop.
3. Watch for plow trucks. Do not crowd/tailgate slow moving maintenance and emergency vehicles.

4. Do not use cruise control on snow covered roads.
5. Four-wheel drive vehicle capabilities should not be over-estimated.
6. Clear all snow & ice from vehicle prior to travel.
7. Have proper snow tires on your vehicle.
8. Be aware of black ice on what appears to be bare pavement.

### **Prioritization:**

During a storm event, priority will be given as follows:

1. Class 2 Town Highways (Pikes Falls Road) approx. 6.5 miles
2. Class 3 Town Highways approx. 43 miles: Roads will be addressed giving priority to paved roads and bus routes.
3. The Highway Dept. will not maintain private roads or private driveways.
4. Priority will be given to intersections, hills and curves.
5. School bus routes will be prioritized as appropriate considering status of school operation, storm duration and nature of conditions.
6. Sidewalks will be addressed as soon as practical during and following a storm event. If the sidewalk is on your property and is a priority for you, please take care of it during the storm event.

### **Procedure:**

Using available resources and judgment based on experience, the Highway Foreman or his designated representative will determine the appropriate level and timing of snow and ice control to be performed by the Highway Department. Each storm is a unique event; therefore deviations from the routine maintenance plan may occur. Decisions must be made using individual judgment based upon a current assessment of the situation. Our Highway Crew are given the responsibility to make decisions regarding snow removal and material application to keep the roads trafficable and reasonably safe while concurrently minimizing costs.

In general, snow will be plowed and sand will be applied during a storm to keep roads open to traffic and to provide an operable roadway surface. Sand will be applied to roadway centers. Curves, hills, intersections and bus routes will be given additional attention. For continuous storms repeated application will be required.

Following storm events, continued maintenance will include improvement of road surfaces by clearing packed snow, pushing back snow on the road shoulders (winging), removing excess snow piles within the village and opening/thawing culverts, ditches and storm drains.

### **Equipment:**

To support winter operations, the Highway Department has the following equipment available:

1. 3 Single axle, 8-yd dump trucks, each equipped with a one-way front plow, wing plow and material spreaders

2. 1 F350 Ford 1-ton truck with plow
3. 1 Kawasaki Bucket Loader
4. 1 John Deere 672 Grader
5. 1 Wacker Neuson wheeled excavator
6. 1 Bobcat S70 skid steer w/ snow blower

### **Materials:**

The Town keeps a stockpile of sand at the Highway Garage, approximately 4,000 cubic yards, for use during the winter months. The Town, as necessary, purchases salt from the District Highway Garage on Route 30. **Residents are allowed a limited amount of sand for personal use only. Please contact the Highway Department or Town Office to make arrangements.**

### **Ordinances/Laws:**

Title 19, Section 1111 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits the encroachment of the Town right-of-way (ROW) without approval of the Selectboard. Objects in the ROW are placed there at the owner's risk and the Town assumes no responsibility for any damage to objects placed in violation of the statute. Common items in the ROW are fences, flower pots, basketball hoops, etc. Recovery of damages will be pursued by the Town if any of the Town's equipment is damaged due to placement of objects in the ROW. **This includes all sidewalks within the village.**

Title 19, Section 1111(b) prohibits the depositing of "material of any kind within, or to in any way obstruct a ditch, culvert or drainage course that drains a highway. "Snow is not to be pushed or placed into these areas at any time.

**Title 23, Section 1126(a) of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits plowing or blowing snow into or across a State or Town Highway, shoulder or sidewalk. Material should not be left such that it creates an obstruction or mound. Violation of this law may result in a fine as determined by the State of Vermont (presently \$70.00).**

**Title 23, Section 1102 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits unattended vehicles from interfering with highway maintenance. Vehicles may be towed without warning. This includes parking along all town roads and sidewalks at all times and along Rte 30 within the village between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am.**

### **Public Communication/Information:**

The Highway Department does not purposely plow snow into private driveways – it is the natural result of plowing operations. When clearing walkways/driveways, individuals should be aware of oncoming plow trucks. Do not attempt to "protect" cleared driveways/walkways by standing at the entrance. Individuals in close proximity to oncoming plow trucks may be injured by snow or debris in the snow from the plow/wing or by the plow truck itself.

The construction of snow forts, tunnels or similar structures in roadside snowbanks should be avoided.



Lawn damage within the ROW is an occurrence even though highway personnel do their best to prevent it. Excessive damage, as determined by the Highway Foreman, may be repaired in the spring or when soil conditions allow.

**Conclusion:**

Vermont winters provide a variety of challenges for town highway personnel, public travelers and private property owners. The adopted Winter Operations Policy should be a source of information and education for the general public. Working together, all entities involved can help to make aspects of winter maintenance easier and winter travel safer for everyone.

Adopted by the Jamaica Selectboard at their regular meeting held on December 8, 2025.