

Town Garage Bond Vote: Frequently Asked Questions

Town of Waitsfield, Vermont · Special Town Meeting, Tuesday, November 3, 2026

The vote

What exactly am I voting on?

The ballot asks whether the Town should issue general obligation bonds or notes in an amount not to exceed \$5,975,000 to build a new Town public works facility at 761 Tremblay Road. The amount is subject to reduction by grants-in-aid or other sources. A "yes" vote authorizes the Selectboard to borrow up to that amount for that purpose. It does not authorize anything else.

When and where do I vote?

Tuesday, November 3, 2026, by Australian ballot – election day. Polls are open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Waitsfield Elementary School, 3951 Main Street. This is the same day as the general election, but it is a separate Town ballot.

Can I vote before November 3?

Yes. Ballots are available now. You can vote early or by absentee ballot at the Town Office any time through the close of business on Monday, November 2. Contact the Town Clerk, Jennifer Peterson, at the Town Office for a ballot or with any question about registration or absentee voting.

Is there a meeting where I can ask questions first?

Yes. The Selectboard holds a public informational hearing on Monday, October 26, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Waitsfield Town Office, 4144 Main Street. You can attend in person or remotely.

Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86201011890?pwd=DbqDMJNPOFuaQM07QyCGAPFCa2qQ4L.1>

Who can vote?

Any person registered to vote in Waitsfield. If you are not registered, you can register right up through election day. For registration questions contact Jennifer Peterson the Town clerk.

Where can I read the official documents?

The Warning, the Form of Ballot, and the Resolution of Necessity are all posted on the Town website with the September 29 public notice.

<https://www.waitsfieldvt.gov/news/post/public-notice-town-garage-bond-vote-tuesday-november-3-2026>

Why a new garage

What is wrong with the garage we have?

It was built for a different era and has been added onto repeatedly over the years. Those additions left an awkward multi-level building that was never truly designed to fit together. Part of it burned decades

ago and was rebuilt. The result is a building that does not fit the Town's equipment, has no proper workshop, no break room, and a long list of code and functional problems.

The pressure has grown. The Town has upgraded equipment that no longer fits the building, and the road crew has taken on work it did not used to do, including maintaining Town parks and sidewalks.

Why not just fix it or add on again?

It has been clear for a long time that the existing building cannot be brought up to what the Town needs. It has already been added onto repeatedly, and no further addition resolves its code and functional problems at a cost that makes sense.

That did not stop the garage planning team from asking the question anyway, along with every other question it could think of. Working with the design and construction-management firms, the team ran through the scenarios one by one, including reworking the existing building, expanding it, and replacing it on its own footprint. The goal was to be certain that no possible solution went unexamined before anything was put in front of voters.

The standard the team held itself to was not whether a building would get the Town through the next few years. It was whether it would work for this generation and the next one. The existing garage cannot meet that test at any reasonable cost. A new facility built next to it can.

Who decided what to build?

A Town Garage Committee did the planning, and the people on it are the people who use the building and answer for it. Charlie Goodman III, the Town's Road Commissioner, served on the committee until his death in the spring of 2026, and much of what he contributed is built into the design. Josh Rogers, the Road Foreman, has been essential throughout, because the crew working in that building every day knows better than anyone what it has to do. The committee also includes Town Administrator York Haverkamp and Selectboard members Brian Shupe and Fred Messer.

The design team came together in an unexpected way. The Town originally hired Breadloaf to design the building. When that company closed, the architects who had been doing the work formed MH2 Architecture Studio and carried the project forward. The Town then brought on Connor Contracting as construction manager. Connor has built town garages across Vermont, which means Waitsfield is working with people who have already solved most of these problems somewhere else.

What was the committee weighing?

Several things at once:

- What the road crew needs to do its work safely and efficiently.
- What the community needs year round, and what it needs after an extreme weather event. How quickly roads reopen depends on whether the crew and its equipment are ready to go.
- What Waitsfield taxpayers can reasonably be asked to carry.
- The values Waitsfield voters have consistently expressed, including sustainability and energy efficiency.

- Room to evolve. Equipment will change over the next fifty years, and electric plow trucks are a real possibility. The project does not install charging equipment now. It puts the conduit and electrical capacity in place so adding it later is a modest job rather than another construction project.

Why now, rather than waiting?

Waiting costs money. Construction costs have been rising by as much as 7 to 10 percent a year, so every year the Town puts this off, the same building costs more. A delay is not a savings. It is a price increase.

There are also no realistic patches left. The building has been added onto and worked around for decades, and the options that remain do not fix anything that matters.

Meanwhile the problems are real and ongoing. The crew works in a building with genuine safety limitations. And because the building does not meet modern codes, the Town carries environmental risk every day it stays in use, including the floor drain with no proper outlet and the extra effort the crew puts in to keep anything from reaching soil and water. Those conditions do not improve on their own.

Two pieces are time-sensitive. Federal reimbursement for the solar portion requires the panels to be on the roof and operating by the end of 2027. And the Town's financing through the Vermont Bond Bank runs on a set schedule, so a November vote lines up with a Bond Bank application in mid-November and funding in late winter, which keeps construction in the 2027 building season.

The solar is also simply a good investment. The array is projected to pay for itself in under 9.5 years, and then to keep producing for decades after that.

Why geothermal heat?

The new building would be heated with ground-source heat pumps, often called geothermal. The system moves heat between the building and the ground, where the temperature stays steady year round, rather than burning fuel to make heat.

The Selectboard did not land on this quickly. The choice came out of multiple conversations with multiple experts in heating systems, and the committee kept asking until it was satisfied it had the right answer for this building.

Geothermal does two things well here. It is highly efficient, which means lower operating costs every year for the life of the building. And it is fully electric, so the Town moves away from fossil fuels like propane, diesel, and fuel oil for heating the building.

That change is specific to heating. The site will still have a diesel tank for fueling trucks, the building will most likely have a backup generator, since battery backup costs considerably more, and the trucks themselves run inside the bays. That is exactly why the building is designed with an exhaust system that monitors the air and turns on automatically when it needs to.

It costs more to install than a conventional system and less to run. For a building the Town expects to operate for generations, that tradeoff favors the Town and its taxpayers. Geothermal is also one of the reasons the project extends three-phase power to the site. The two decisions go together.

Does geothermal qualify for the federal reimbursement?

Yes. The federal government reimburses public entities for 30 percent of the cost of qualifying geothermal systems. Unlike the solar portion, which has to be operating by the end of 2027, the geothermal incentive has no comparable deadline at this time.

There may also be more to it than a simple 30 percent of the equipment. Depending on how the work is structured, some costs not obviously part of a heating system may still qualify. The Town is working through that, which is why the reimbursement estimate carries a floor rather than a fixed number.

Why is it called Goodman's Garage?

The facility is named for Charlie E. Goodman III, who served as the Town's Road Commissioner for many years and who passed away in the spring of 2026.

The building and the site

What would be built?

Two things. A public works building of about 11,200 square feet, and a new three-sided building for storing road salt. The current salt shed is, remarkably, still standing.

What is inside the public works building?

Seven bays, including a dedicated wash bay with proper drainage so vehicles can be maintained through the winter. Indoor storage for all Town vehicles and equipment. A workshop the crew can actually use, without hauling equipment up and down stairs through tight spaces. Office and break-room space, which barely exist today. And ready access to basic equipment such as air compressors and adequate lighting.

Why does it need seven bays?

The number came from the people who know the equipment best. Charlie Goodman and Josh Rogers spent considerable time going through the Town's vehicles one by one, working out what it actually takes to store them properly and to work on them.

Two things drive the count. First, this is expensive equipment, and storing it indoors is what protects that investment. A plow truck kept out of the weather lasts longer and costs less to maintain than one that sits outside through a Vermont winter. Second, the crew does most of its own work on these trucks, including welding and repairs. That takes real space, and doing it in cramped quarters is slower and less safe.

Seven bays is what came out of that work. It is not a round number someone picked. It is the result of counting the equipment and measuring what the crew needs around it.

Where would it go?

On the Town-owned site at 761 Tremblay Road, next to the existing garage.

Where exactly it sits on that site was worked out carefully. The layout takes better advantage of the land the Town already owns, and it is laid out around how the crew actually moves through a day: where trucks come in and go out, where they get loaded, and where they park when the work is done. In a building this size, the difference between a layout that works and one that does not shows up every single morning, and especially at four in the morning during a storm.

Why not tear down the old garage and build on its footprint?

That was the original plan. Working through the options with the design team, the team found that building alongside the existing garage had real advantages. The crew can keep working out of the old building during construction instead of renting temporary space. The Town avoids the cost of demolishing and hauling away the old building. And the old building still has value as unheated storage.

The strongest argument came from outside Waitsfield. During the early design phase, the Town Administrator and MH2 toured town garages around the state. At every stop, the road foreman said the same thing, without being asked: do not tear down an existing garage if it can be saved. They had reasons, and they were emphatic about it.

That is how most of this project has gone. Rather than start from scratch, the committee went and looked at what other towns had built, asked what they would do differently, and brought the answers home. There was no need to reinvent the wheel when so many Vermont towns had already worked through the same problems.

What happens to the old garage?

It stays, and becomes cold storage. Two Conex shipping containers now sit on the site holding equipment and materials. Those can be removed and their contents moved into the existing building.

What is wrong with the salt shed?

Road salt is highly corrosive, so a building that can store it safely for decades is not an inexpensive structure. The Town continues to work on reducing how much salt it applies to paved roads, but salt remains necessary for safe winter driving. And currently the current salt shed is somehow still standing...barely.

Cost and financing

Is \$5,975,000 what this will cost?

\$5,975,000 is a ceiling, not a target. It is the most the Town could borrow if voters approve. The Town cannot borrow more than that, and if the project does not need the full amount, the full amount is not borrowed. The figure comes from a detailed cost estimate the Selectboard reviewed in September 2026.

Where does the money come from?

Three loans, plus the reserve fund the Town has already built.

The largest loan covers the building itself, along with design, engineering, and the rest of the project costs. The Town expects to borrow it through the Vermont Bond Bank, which gets municipalities better rates than they could get on their own. The Town will not know that rate until the Bond Bank completes its work in early 2027. The expectation is a 30 year term for the largest loan.

The two smaller loans are both for the sustainability pieces of the project, and both carry better terms than the main loan:

- The Municipal Energy Revolving Fund, a State program, lends at 0% for work like the solar array and the geothermal system.
- The Vermont Bond Bank's energy program lends at a rate below what the main bond will carry, and also supports the geothermal and related work.

Separately, the Town has a reserve fund established specifically for the Town Garage. That fund has already paid for much of the work that got the project to this point, including a significant share of the design work, environmental work, etc. A percentage of this fiscal year's local option tax revenue goes into the same fund.

Borrowing this way is deliberate. The parts of the project that advance the Town's sustainability goals are financed at 0% and at below-bond rates, which is what makes the solar array pay for itself in under 9.5 years. Putting that work into the cheapest money available is the responsible way to build this building.

What are the energy loans?

About \$500,000 of the project cost qualifies for favorable State financing for energy improvements. The Town is pursuing two ten-year loans, one at 0% through the State's Municipal Energy Revolving Fund and one at a low rate through the Vermont Bond Bank's energy program.

Is the Town getting any of this money back?

Yes. The federal government reimburses public entities for 30% of the cost of solar and geothermal systems after they are installed. The Town estimates that at roughly \$175,000, and possibly more depending on which portions of the work qualify. To get the solar share, the panels have to be on the roof and operating by the end of 2027.

Because that money arrives after construction rather than before it, the Selectboard is looking at interim financing so those costs do not have to be carried in a long-term loan.

Has the Town saved anything toward this?

Yes. In March 2025 voters established a reserve fund for improvements, expansion, or replacement of the Town Garage and put \$100,000 into it. In March 2026 voters earmarked an additional 15% of the year's local option tax revenue for that fund.

Will the Town look for grants?

The ballot language says the amount is subject to reduction by grants-in-aid or other sources. The Town will continue to look for potential grants to support the project.

Who is building it, and how was that decided?

MH2 Architecture Studio is the architect. Connor Contracting was selected as construction manager after the Town solicited and reviewed proposals from five firms, conducted site visits, and interviewed finalists.

What it means for my tax bill

This is the question most voters care about most, and it deserves the clearest answer on the page.

How much will this add to my taxes?

The answer depends on how much of the Town's new local option tax revenue goes toward the garage. Here are two estimates for the first full year of payments (July 2027 to June 2028):

- If no local option tax revenue is used: about \$102 per \$100,000 of assessed value. For a home assessed at \$300,000, that's about \$307 per year. For a home assessed at \$400,000, about \$410 per year.
- If half of the expected local option tax revenue (about \$300,000 a year) is used: about \$28 per \$100,000 of assessed value. For a home assessed at \$300,000, that's about \$85 per year. For a home assessed at \$400,000, about \$114 per year.

These estimates include the garage loan and two smaller energy loans, minus about \$70,000 a year in existing Town debt that is being paid off. Garage payments go down each year, so the tax impact is highest in the first year and gets smaller after that. The estimates don't account for growth in the Town's grand list, which would lower them. Final figures will depend on interest rates when the bonds are sold.

To estimate your own cost, divide your assessed value by 100,000 and multiply by the figure above.

What is the local option tax, and how does it affect this?

In March 2026, Waitsfield voters approved a 1% local option tax on sales, meals and alcoholic beverages, and rooms. It is collected along with the state's existing taxes on those purchases, so it is paid by anyone buying goods, meals, or lodging in Waitsfield, including visitors, not only by Waitsfield property owners.

The Town expects the tax to bring in roughly \$600,000 a year. The Selectboard intends to use about half of that, roughly \$300,000 a year, toward garage debt service. That would reduce the first-year property tax impact from about \$102 to about \$28 per \$100,000 of assessed value. (See "How much will this add to my taxes?" above.)

The rest of the local option tax revenue is available for other Town needs, including the community wastewater project.

What happens if the vote fails?

In the short term, the Town would need to keep the existing garage working. That means continuing to repair and maintain a building that has outgrown its use, managing the floor drain that has no proper outlet, and addressing safety, code, and environmental issues as they come up. The road crew would keep working around the building's limits, which costs time on every job. These costs would be paid from the regular Town budget, and none of them would move the Town closer to a long-term solution.

The Selectboard expects to bring a garage proposal back to voters. The current building's problems would not go away, and the Town's road crew would still need a workable place to maintain equipment and serve the community.

A revised proposal would likely look much like this one. The Town Garage Committee, working with the road department, architects, engineers, and the construction manager, spent many months weighing needs, values, and cost, and the current design reflects those decisions. There is limited room to reduce the size or scope without giving up things the building needs to do.

Construction costs have generally risen year over year. A future proposal for a similar building would likely cost more than this one, and would come with its own interest rates at the time of borrowing.

This vote is your say in whether to move forward now.

When would I first see this on a tax bill?

The Town expects to receive the bond funds in late winter 2027. The first full year of payments falls in the Town's 2028 fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2027 to June 30, 2028. Those payments would be included in the FY2028 budget presented at Town Meeting in March 2027, and would first appear on the property tax bills for that year, sent out in summer 2027.

Why spend money on energy features at all?

Because the building gets paid for once, but the Town will heat, light, and run it for fifty years or more. Spending more up front on a well-insulated building and efficient systems lowers what the Town pays every year after that.

The garage is being designed to the 2024 Vermont Commercial Building Energy Standards, the stricter of the two editions the State currently allows, and its main insulation goes beyond what that code requires:

- **Roof:** about R-48 (code requires R-45)
- **Exterior walls:** insulated metal panels rated about R-28 to R-32 (code requires R-25)
- **Under the heated floor slab:** better than the code benchmark
- **Foundation walls and slab edges:** about R-20, meeting code

The building will be heated with ground-source heat pumps (geothermal) through a radiant floor, rather than fuel-burning equipment.

Rooftop solar is included as a bid option to supply the electricity the Town's existing array doesn't cover. The proposed 132-kilowatt array is projected to save the Town about \$22,000 in electricity in its first year and to pay for itself in a little over 9 years. Over 25 years, the installer projects about \$500,000 in

savings after paying for the system. Federal and State incentives are expected to cover more than a third of its cost.

What is three-phase power and why does it cost \$175,000?

Most homes and small buildings run on single-phase power. Three-phase is the type of electrical service used by larger commercial and industrial buildings. It delivers power more steadily and can run large motors and equipment more efficiently.

The site doesn't have three-phase service today, so Green Mountain Power would need to extend it. Because bringing three-phase power into this part of the Valley also supports GMP's own plans for the area, GMP has worked with the Town to keep the cost down. As a result, the estimate for the work is up to \$175,000, less than the Town would otherwise expect to pay.

The Town is including it for three reasons:

- **Heating.** The building's geothermal heat pumps, which supply the radiant floor, need three-phase power at this size. Geothermal costs less to run than the alternatives for the life of the building.
- **Equipment.** Steadier power is easier on electrical equipment like welders, compressors, and lifts, and is estimated to extend the life of some of it by as much as 50%.
- **The future.** As trucks and equipment move toward electric power, the garage will be able to charge them without another costly upgrade.

Were there environmental problems at the existing garage?

The Town completed a Phase I environmental site assessment, and its findings led to a Phase II assessment. Both are now complete.

One clear problem is the floor drain in the current garage, which has no proper outlet. To keep anything harmful from going down it, the crew has had to put in a great deal of extra time and effort. That is inefficient, and it makes for a harder and less healthy place to work.

How does the new building fix that?

Floor drains in the new building, including the wash bay, would flow to a collection tank that captures oil, grease, and other residue so it can be removed and disposed of properly. The building would also have sensors that automatically turn on exhaust fans to keep the air safe for the crew.

Is this about worker safety?

In part, yes. The current building has ventilation, electrical, and space constraints that a new facility is designed to resolve. The Town's road crew works in this building through every winter storm.

What happens next, either way

If the vote passes, what happens?

The Town applies to the Vermont Bond Bank in mid-November, with funding expected in late winter. Design and permitting documents are completed over the winter, the work goes out to bid, and construction is targeted for the 2027 season.

If the vote passes, is the Town locked into spending the full amount?

No. The authorization sets a ceiling. If bids, reserve funds, or incentive programs bring the cost down, the Town borrows less.

Can the result be challenged or revoted?

Under Vermont law, voters may petition for reconsideration or rescission of a vote taken at town meeting within a set period after the vote.

Has the Town done a project like this before?

Yes. The municipal water system was built with grants and loans and has been operating for over a decade, and the community wastewater project is under way now.

Who do I ask?

For questions about voter registration, early voting, or absentee ballots, contact Jennifer Peterson, Town Clerk, at the Town Office, (802) 496-2218.

For questions about the project, contact York Haverkamp, Town Administrator, at york.haverkamp@waitsfieldvt.gov or (802) 496-2218 ext. 5.