

City of Barre
 Official Annual City and
 BUUSD School budget revote Election Results

May 14, 2024

May 14, 2024 Town Meeting Day results.
 Due to the recent floods we moved our
 town meeting day to May.

Voted Item	Ward I	Ward II	Ward III	Totals
Article II- Shall the Barre City Voters authorize the sum of \$450,000 for Street Reconstruction and Sidewalk Improvements, and the Capital Improvement Fund?				
Yes	578	421	367	1366
No	80	42	65	187
Overvotes	0	0	0	0
Undervotes	5	5	2	12
Totals	663	468	434	1565

Article III- Shall the Barre City Charter be hereby amended to change the date of the annual meeting elections (complete text of proposed revisions on ballot):				
Yes	362	281	256	899
No	283	167	168	618
Overvotes	0	0	0	0
Undervotes	18	20	10	48
Totals	663	468	434	1565

Article IV- Shall the Barre City Charter be hereby amended as follows to separate the positions of Clerk and Treasurer, and change the Treasurer position to appointed (complete text of proposed revisions on ballot):				
Yes	449	318	290	1057
No	176	123	125	424
Overvotes	0	0	0	0
Undervotes	41	27	19	87
Totals	666	468	434	1568

Article V - Shall the Barre City Charter be hereby amended as follows to remove references to the City school district, which has been replaced by the Barre Unified Union School District (complete text of proposed revisions on ballot):				
Yes	450	330	281	1061
No	162	103	124	389
Overvotes	0	0	0	0
Undervotes	51	35	29	115
Totals	663	468	434	1565

Article VI - Shall the Barre City Charter be hereby amended to allow youth voter participation for local municipal elections and offices (complete text of proposed revisions on ballot):				
Yes	182	150	133	465
No	465	301	287	1053
Overvotes	1	0	0	1
Undervotes	15	17	14	46
Totals	663	468	434	1565

This is the voter turnout since 2011. 2024 was the third highest voter turnout. Just for context, the Primary Election in March had 1,352 voters. Still short of what we had in May.

Year	Voters
2024	1565 No Presidential Primary (Held in May)
2023	1241
2022	1276
2021	1469
2020	1952 Presidential Primary
2019	839
2018	1379
2017	1063
2016	1983 Presidential Primary
2015	1053
2014	981
2013	1156
2012	1431 Presidential Primary
2011	1053

To be approved at 04/23/24 Barre City Council Meeting

C) 1st hearing warned 7:00 PM: Charter changes.

Mayor Hemmerick opened the public hearing at 7:00 PM and invited comments from the public and Council. There are four categories of charter changes being proposed:

1. Moving the annual meeting from March to May;
2. Separating the positions of clerk and treasurer, and making the treasurer position appointed;
3. Removing references to the City school district, which has been replaced by the Barre Unified Union School District;
4. Allow youth voter participation in local elections, except school elections.

John LePage said he soundly endorses the youth voting proposal that would allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in local elections except school votes. Mr. LePage said the proposal to move the annual meeting elections from March to May is a bad idea, and would lower participation and double the costs associated with holding elections.

Bernadette Rose said she agrees with Mr. LePage. Ms. Rose said youth voting would involve parents, and youth voters would encourage tenant residents to participate.

Steve Mackenzie said the youth voter language should be dropped, as 16 and 17 year olds are outside the age of majority, and they don't have a stake in the game when it comes to voting on City budgets.

Councilor Boutin said he supports moving the annual meeting to May, and does not support youth voting.

Tina Routhier said she doesn't support youth voting, as she wouldn't give a blank check to her grandchildren on the municipal budget.

Barbara Druge said she is opposed to the youth voter language and they should not be making decisions for property owners. Ms. Druge said 16 and 17 year olds' minds are not developed enough to make decisions on things like drinking, smoking and voting.

Removing the school references in Charter

Hearing no additional comments, Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to remove school-related language from the charter on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Moving Town Meeting Day to May

Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to move the annual meeting from the first Tuesday in March to the second Tuesday in May on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick and Councilor Stockwell voting against.**

Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to allow youth voters on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

Separating the Clerk from the Treasurer position

There was discussion on the proposed charter change to separate the clerk and treasurer positions. Bernadette Rose said no future clerk/treasurer will be anything like Clerk/Treasurer Dawes. Sonya Spaulding asked about the lack of candidates running for the clerk/treasurer position. Clerk Dawes said Council will appoint someone to the position following the annual meeting elections, if nobody is elected through write-in. Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to separate the clerk and treasurer positions and making the treasurer appointed on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

Moving Town Meeting Day to May

Nicolas Storellicastro • City Manager, City Office, Barre

Election

The proposed charter change to permanently move Barre City's annual election to the second Tuesday in May has generated a spirited debate. This proposal was placed on the ballot primarily at the request of City staff, so I would like to let voters understand why we recommended this change.

As you know, this year the City Council moved the annual meeting to the second Tuesday in May so that the City had additional time to advocate for funding from the state to address the financial impacts of the flood. This was a wise decision by the City Council, as the legislature secured \$1 million for Barre. With this funding, we restored devastating service cuts, accounted for the loss of grand list value, and presented a budget to voters with a predictable and reasonable projected tax rate increase.

Normally, City staff would begin working on the following year's budget in September, about two months into the current fiscal year. This year, since the budget did not have to be finalized until April, we had over half a year's worth of actual financial details to prepare the budget. This resulted in a better budget that recognized over \$245,000 in savings.

A budget is a community's most important document – it sets priorities and allocates resources for the services residents have come to appreciate and value. Every rational organization – public or private – would opt to make its most critical decisions with more data. The Barre City budget shouldn't be any different.

Some have said a May election would make it too difficult to vote. I disagree. It has never been easier to vote in Vermont. Beyond polls being open from 7AM to 7PM on election day, voters can cast ballots by mail or through early voting during the weeks leading up to election day.

Others have said our election would no longer align with the state's Town Meeting Day holiday. Not all employers in Barre recognize the holiday, and those that do could start observing the May date. That's what the City did this year – our employees worked the March Town Meeting date and will instead the Town Meeting Day holiday on May 14. If voters are not granted the holiday, there are still numerous opportunities to vote early and by mail before election day.

Some have raised the costs of running a new election. This debate has highlighted an inequity that needs to be addressed. A town meeting election costs approximately \$7,000 to run. Under the current model where both the City and school annual meetings are held on the same date, the City general fund is subsidizing elections for the school district. The City budget is around \$14 million, the school district budget is approximately \$50 million. In the future, costs for elections where both entities have items on the ballot ought to be shared.

One final consideration - Barre Town also holds elections on the second Tuesday in May. There would be a natural synergy for the City and Town to observe municipal elections on the same day. The Town also serves as an example that May annual elections have worked well for decades.

I appreciate the debate on this issue, and remind voters that had we voted in March this year, we may have been facing a 19 percent projected tax increase. A May budget vote allowed us to present a budget with a 5 percent projected tax increase because of better and more accurate data. I encourage voters to vote yes on Article III so we can continue to bring you responsible and measured budgets in the future.

[Email Author](#)[Reply to Forum](#)

In addition to approving the original bill submitted we ask that you do some housekeeping that we missed while drafting the charter changes regarding the change in Town Meeting Day. Please see email below.

Michael Boutin

From: Carol Dawes <TIFAdmin@barrecity.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2024 4:27 PM
To: Tucker Anderson; Michael Boutin; Edward "Teddy" Waszazak
Cc: Nicolas Storellicastro
Subject: [External] Barre City charter changes

[External]

Hi all,

It's come to our attention that we missed a section of the charter that refers to the March annual meeting. It should be amended to change the reference to May, as was approved by the voters earlier this year. I believe Tucker is working on the draft bill. See the highlighted language below.

Let me know if there are any questions.

Thanks,
Carol Dawes

Sec. 207. Voting on requests of the city manager.

(a) **Annually, on the first Tuesday in March** the legal voters of the city shall vote on the requests of the city manager. (Amend. of 05/10/2005, Amend. of 11/07/06)

(b) **If, at the annual March meeting,** the voters disapprove the request of the Manager, the Mayor, or in his or her absence or disability, the City Clerk shall warn a meeting of the legal voters to consider the article disapproved by the voters, and to autl

6/8/2022

CHARTER

specific sum of money therefor. The meeting shall be in accordance with 17 V.S.A. §§ 2689 and shall be held at the same location as the previous meeting with the polls open same hours as the previous meeting. If the voters continue to disapprove any portion o request, similar meetings shall be held in the same manner. (Amend. of 9/13/88, Amen 05/10/05, Amend. of 11/07/06)(Amend of 5/8/12)

(c) When the legal voters have authorized a specific sum for the request of Manager, the City Council shall set the tax rate necessary to raise the specific sum(s) s (Amend of 5/8/12)

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