Town Report Contest

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Current as of: 11/24/2026

A collaboration between the Vermont League of Cities & Towns, Vermont Regional Planning Commissions, and the Vermont Secretary of State's office.

The annual report can be one of the most comprehensive and effective ways to keep residents informed of what's going on in their community and local government. While the annual audit report is the only legally required component, most Vermont municipalities use their annual report to provide valuable community information for residents. Reports provide a snapshot of the community, in many cases containing municipal departmental updates, budget information, marriage licenses issued, births and deaths, local organizations, awards, and more.

The 2026 Vermont Town Report Contest

Rating was conducted by judges from VLCT, Vermont Regional Planning Commissions, and the Secretary of State's Office. **To view the criteria our judges used and learn more about what makes a great town report, view our Annual Town Report Best Practices Guide.**

2026 MEMBERS CHOICE CONTEST WINNER: TOWN OF FAYSTON

Municipal staff and officials were invited to vote on their favorite town report from among the 12 award winners selected by our panel of volunteer judges from September 15-October 7th and the results are in! ***Congratulations to the Town of Fayston.***

Judges' Award Winners

Category Winners (by population)

Population <1,000

- Gold: Westfield Town

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- Silver: Elmore Town
- Bronze: West Fairlee Town
- Honorable Mention: Peacham

Judges' Highlights: Gold — Westfield Town (84.00) led the under-1,000 group with best-practice formatting and a highly useful one-page resident guide. Judges praised its clear reserve-fund and financial explanations, easy-to-scan meeting actions and results, historical context, relevant photos, social service requests paired with supporting reports, and welcoming call for volunteers. Silver — Elmore Town (82.00) combined an appealing photo-rich layout with recognition of a retiring fire department leader and resident-friendly touches such as a potluck and babysitting; judges noted missing comparative budget detail or narrative, contact information, and other innovations. Bronze — West Fairlee Town (79.33) earned praise for its strong cover and clear explanations of the town meeting process and the duties of local officials and committees; judges noted that an audit or audit reference was missing.

Population 1,000 to 1,500

- Gold: Lincoln Town
- Silver: North Hero Town
- Bronze: Fayston Town [2026 Member's Choice Award Winner]
- Honorable Mention: Dover Town

Judges Highlights: Gold — Lincoln Town (87.00) combined detailed town-meeting, voting, and accessibility guidance with organized financial tables, officer contacts, and a value-added road-classification map. Its thematic approach was effective, though judges suggested moving the table of contents earlier and applying comparative budget information and formatting more consistently. Silver — North Hero Town (84.50) stood out for a cohesive water-centered project and dedication, supported by an exceptionally clear budget explanation and capital improvement plan. Bronze — Fayston Town (79.50) paired a historical-society theme and creative photography with

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complete official contact information, useful financial reporting, and an especially strong asset inventory; judges noted the lack of year-over-year percentage changes and that the professional audit became available online after the report was issued.

Population 1,500 to 3,000

- Gold: Putney Town
- Silver: Huntington Town
- Bronze: Middlesex Town
- Honorable Mention: Guilford Town

Judges Highlights: Gold — Putney Town (97.33) led the 1,500–3,000 group with exceptional organization, color, graphs, staff and officer contacts, and the strongest budget presentation noted by the judges. Highlights included a consolidated financial section, year-over-year comparisons, debt and asset reporting, budget pie charts, a rules-and-voting cheat sheet, department and committee background, and a photo recap of completed projects; the audit was linked rather than included. Silver — Huntington Town (94.50) excelled in clearly organized sections, participation tips, a simplified guide to Robert's Rules, useful contact sheets, and narrative financials explaining each special fund. Bronze — Middlesex Town (91.50) blended accessibility and engagement—childcare, rides, a ballot copy, and a word search—with clear budget summaries and resident-focused explanations of where tax dollars go and how line items affect taxes.

Population 3,000 and up

- Gold: Essex Junction City
- Silver: Essex Town
- Bronze: Montpelier City
- Honorable Mention: Brattleboro Town

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Judges Highlights: Gold — Essex Junction City (97.67) delivered an exceptional report with strong design, clear navigation, engaging color, staff photos, consistently formatted third-party reports, excellent financial presentation, abundant online links, and best-practice budget pie charts. Judges' principal improvement was adding hyperlinks to the table of contents. Silver — Essex Town (94.00) used whimsical sticky-note graphics and thoughtful page design to guide readers, complemented by strong Parks & Recreation and Police sections, a clear "what's on the ballot" feature, and thorough selectboard and manager budget narratives; judges likewise recommended a hyperlinked table of contents. Bronze — Montpelier City (86.00) was visually engaging, with memorable photography, polished department reports, comparative budget percentages, and an especially useful directory listing officials' email address.

Across all four groups, the strongest reports made complex civic and financial information easier to use: clear navigation, plain-language budget context, year-over-year comparisons, complete contacts, accessibility guidance, and purposeful visuals consistently separated the leaders from the field.

The Judges

- **Catherine Dimitruk,** Executive Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- **Callie Fishburn,** Regional Planner/Energy Program Manager, Bennington County Regional Commission
- **Carter Finegan,** Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) Coordinator, Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- **Victoria Hellwig,** *Regional & Economic Development Planner,* Lamoille County Planning Commission

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Current as of: 11/24/2026

- **Rebecca Elder,** *Director of Operations & Finance,* Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- **Susan Clark, Educator, Middlesex Town Moderator, Co-Author** *All Those In Favor: Rediscovering the Secrets of Town Meeting and Community*, and *Slow Democracy.*
- **Jenne Greaves,** Records and Information Management Specialist, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, Vermont Secretary of State's office.
- **Kelly Pajala**, Municipal Division at the Secretary of State's Office.
- **Abigail Friedman** is the Municipal Assistance Program Director for the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.
- **Ted Brady** is the Executive Director for the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

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