



VLCT Model Social Services Appropriations Policy with Guidance

***PLEASE NOTE: Due to COVID-19 some rules for 2021 town meetings have been modified by the Vermont Legislature. Please reference our Town Meeting COVID-19 FAQs at <https://www.vlct.org/town-meeting-covid-19-faqs>**

Under Vermont law, voters of a town may appropriate money for the support of social service programs and agencies that provide services to town residents. 24 V.S.A. § 2691. Such programs include, but are not limited to, transportation, nutrition, child care, medical care, and other rehabilitative services for persons with low incomes, senior citizens, children, disabled persons, drug and alcohol abusers, and persons requiring employment to eliminate their need for public assistance.

An article regarding an appropriation to a social service agency can be placed on the town meeting warning by vote of the selectboard. Alternatively, a social service agency may submit a petition signed by 5% of the voters to the town clerk by the 47th day before the date of Town Meeting. 17 V.S.A § 2642(a)(3)(A). These petitioned requests, if valid and timely, must be included in the warning.

Because of the proliferation of social service agency requests, selectboards may find it helpful to adopt a policy to manage these requests. Some selectboards require that all social service agency requests be submitted by petition. Other selectboards allow social service agencies that have had an appropriation approved at the last annual meeting to be included on the warning without a petition as long as the requested appropriation is the same or less than the amount previously approved by the voters. While both methods are appropriate, this model policy describes the latter of these two arrangements. Please note that any italicized language in this model denotes a policy choice to be made by the selectboard prior to adoption.

This model also provides an example of a petitioned article and language to encourage or require social service agencies to describe their programs for inclusion in the town's annual report. In addition, language can be added to this policy to require social service agencies to provide some form of financial disclosure as a condition for receiving an appropriation.



This model policy has been developed for illustrative purposes only. VLCT makes no express or implied endorsement or recommendation of any policy, nor does it make any express or implied guarantee of legal enforceability or legal compliance, nor does VLCT represent that any policy is appropriate for any particular town. Your legal counsel should review any proposed social service appropriation policy before adoption.

If you have specific questions about this policy please contact us at (800) 649-7915 or info@vlct.org.



VLCT Model Social Services Appropriations Policy

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Social Service Appropriation Policy Town of _____

PURPOSE: Under Vermont law, a town may appropriate such sums of money as it deems necessary for the support of social service programs and agencies that provide services to town residents. 24 V.S.A. § 2691. The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for managing social service agency appropriations that will be voted upon at the Town of _____ Annual Meeting.

APPLICABILITY: This policy applies to appropriation requests from social services agencies and programs subject to the provisions of Title 24, Chapter 73 of Vermont Statutes Annotated. Such programs include, but are not limited to, transportation, nutrition, child care, medical care, and other rehabilitative services for persons with low incomes, senior citizens, children, disabled persons, drug and alcohol abusers, and persons requiring employment to eliminate their need for public assistance.

This policy does not apply to town membership organizations such as the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the _____ Regional Planning Commission, or the _____ Solid Waste Management District.

PROCEDURE: Those social service agencies that have not had an appropriation request approved at the most recent annual town meeting, or that are requesting a larger appropriation than that approved at the most recent annual town meeting, must submit a petition for an article requesting an appropriation in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2642. Such petition must be signed by at least five percent of the voters of the town and filed with the Town Clerk not less than 47 days before the day of the annual meeting. The petition should be in substantially the following form:

Petition of Legal Voters of the Town of _____

We, the undersigned legal voters of the Town of _____, hereby petition the Selectboard to add the following article to the warning for the annual town meeting to be held on Tuesday, March __, 20__:

Shall the Town appropriate \$[insert amount of request] to [insert name of social service agency], for [insert brief description of the purpose of the proposed appropriation] in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691?

Print Name

Address

Signature

Pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2642(a)(3)(C), a petition must contain the petition language on every page on which signatures are collected and must contain the printed name, signature, and street address of each voter who signs the petition.

No proposed article may contain any opinion or comment about the subject being voted upon. Petitions submitted after the deadline will not be honored. Petitions submitted prior to the deadline but not containing the required number of signatures shall be returned by the Town Clerk within 24 hours from receipt stating in writing on the petition why it cannot be accepted. Any petition returned to the petitioners may be amended to correct any stated deficiencies and refiled with the Town Clerk not later than 48 hours after the petition was returned by the Clerk, or the filing deadline, whichever is later. However, supplementary petitions shall not be accepted if the original petition did not meet the filing deadline or did not contain the requisite number of signatures.

Those social service agencies that have had an appropriation request approved at the most recent annual town meeting are not required to submit a petition for an article requesting an appropriation if the amount requested is the same or less than the amount approved by the voters in the previous year. In such case, the agency should make its request by letter to the Selectboard postmarked no later than [*insert any number of days*¹] days before the day of Town Meeting. If the last day for filing letters with the Selectboard falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the deadline shall be extended to the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. The letter should identify the name of the agency, the amount requested for appropriation, and a person to contact for more information. Agencies that do not submit a letter to the Selectboard before the [*insert any number of days*]-day deadline must submit a voter-backed petition in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2642.

All social service agencies requesting appropriations under this policy are [*encouraged/required*] to submit a description of the agency's programs for inclusion in the Town's Annual Report. Descriptions must be limited to [*insert number of words or pages*] and should describe the program or services provided to Town residents. Agency representatives are encouraged to attend [*Town Meeting and/or the public informational hearing*] to explain the appropriation request to the voters and answer their questions.

¹ In setting this deadline, the Selectboard is not limited to the 47 day deadline imposed for voter-backed petitions. Instead, the Selectboard should set this deadline based on the time needed to finalize the town meeting warning.



Approved social service appropriations will be paid by the Town on the following schedule:

Payment is subject to the availability of funds.

The foregoing policy is hereby adopted by the Selectboard of the Town of _____,
Vermont, this ___ day of _____, and is effective as of this date until amended or
repealed.
