



## News Coverage

Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts  
24 Ashfield Road, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370  
413-625-9811  
mtrsd.org

### [Local meals tax, \\$5.29M budget approved in Colrain](#)

By Madison Schofield, Staff Writer

Published: 05-07-2025 1:00 PM

COLRAIN — In just an hour and half, Colrain residents approved all [25 articles on the Annual Town Meeting warrant](#) on Tuesday, thus adopting a local meals tax and approving a \$5.29 million budget for fiscal year 2026.

One hundred and twenty residents convened at Colrain Central School, leaving standing room only to discuss the meals tax. Residents questioned why such a tax was needed and what impact it would have on the two businesses that offer prepared meals: Pine Hill Orchards and Catamount Country Store.

“We have one place in town that graciously will fix pizzas and grinders on a Friday evening,” resident June Ahearn commented. “I think this tax will hurt them and it will hurt locals.”

Selectboard Chair Emily Thurber, who also works as the manager of Catamount Country Store on Main Road, said the tax is a small amount, and would require no additional work for the two businesses in town that offer food. The tax is added to the state meals tax, raising the rate from 6.25% to 7%, then the state returns the 0.75% to the town.

She added that the tax would offer the town additional revenue outside of property taxes. By imposing a meals tax, the town can earn a few cents from each meal served, including those purchased by non-residents who are passing through town.

“I have asked a lot of customers, regular customers, how they would feel about this. They didn’t seem to have much of a problem with it at all. This would really be helpful for catching some out-of-town dollars,” Thurber said. “We spend a lot of time and energy on the roads, keeping them safe for all the people traveling through our town. If we could capture just a little bit of money from them, that would be great.”

She added that she did not have an estimate for how much the town would raise from the tax, as that calculation would have required Pine Hill Orchards to submit sales records. However, she did calculate how much it would raise from Catamount Country Store. The tax would raise between \$600 and \$1,000 annually, which could be put toward road improvements and other projects.

Residents asked if the revenue could be put toward a business development fund, to which Thurber said the state would return the tax money to Colrain’s general fund, but the town could look at identifying specific uses for the money in the future.

Voters also approved a \$5.29 million budget, which included \$2.86 million in education costs. Residents questioned if any cuts were made to the Mohawk Trail Regional School District budget to keep costs down and inquired about the Highway Department budget, which rose by \$72,405, or 9.11%, to a total of \$866,931.

Town Administrator Diana Parsons said the town has hired more Highway Department staff and increased the pay rates for existing staff.

“As far as the Highway Department, I think everyone noticed that we had, in the past few years, a couple of challenges in terms of staffing and having the right number for the services we need,” Parsons said. “We have more than 80 miles of road. We have one of the largest amounts of road miles in the county, which takes more time and money.”

Mohawk Trail School Committee member Kate Barrows said it was a tight budget year, and the district is working to provide the best education the towns can afford.

“We’re going to be doing a lot more work moving forward to try to maintain the quality of education for students and balance that with our budget,” Barrows said. “The budget we are proposing is really higher than anybody wants it to be. We made cuts we did not want to have to make, but felt like we split the difference between making quality education and trying to make it as affordable as possible to the town.”

“I love the school, I’ve always loved the schools, but I think the budgets are getting out of control,” resident Kate Scranton commented.

For FY26, Colrain’s assessment for the Mohawk Trail Regional School District is \$2.51 million, a 3.54% increase. The Franklin County Technical School assessment is \$349,894, a 12.85% increase from FY25. A detailed Mohawk Trail Regional School District budget presentation can be found at [mtrsd.org/Business-Services](https://mtrsd.org/Business-Services).

Other articles passed included:

- Buying a \$850,000 fire truck to replace the Fire Department’s current vehicle from 2001.
- Allocating \$1,500 to pay for emergency supplies and services at Griswold Memorial Library.
- Approving a \$734,076 broadband budget, which will result in a \$5 reduction in monthly user fees, effective July 1.

The meeting adjourned shortly after 7:30 p.m., with Moderator Joe Kurland thanking attendees for asking questions, offering discussion and engaging in the democratic process.

“At Colrain Town Meeting, we welcome community members to share their concerns and ideas,” Kurland said, “as we pursue what is best for our town.”

Reach Madison Schofield at 413-930-4579 or [mschofield@recorder.com](mailto:mschofield@recorder.com).

Source: <https://www.recorder.com/Local-meals-tax-5-29M-budget-approved-in-Colrain-61057133>