Improve Technology & Audio

A1. Hybrid meeting platform (Zoom) for informational hearings & Selectboard business

Category	A. Remote & Hybrid Participation
Value Proposition	Removes the biggest access barrier (having to travel to and sit through an in-person meeting) for caregivers, residents with mobility limits, seasonal residents, and evening workers. Supported by 1 V.S.A. §312(a)(2) for board/committee meetings.
Technical Support	Vendor (Zoom) platform support included in paid business tiers (help center, email/chat, phone on business plans). Day-of meeting-host troubleshooting typically falls to town staff or IT contractor.
Repair / Maintenance	None if reusing existing computer/webcam/mic; software updates are vendor-managed.
Warranty	N/A (software); any new webcam/mic hardware: 1-3 yr manufacturer warranty.
Approx. Cost	~$200-$500/yr for a single-host business license; no material added cost if bundled with AV upgrade (C2).
Vermont / Legal Notes	Clean fit for boards/committees. Does NOT resolve whether remote floor voting is authorized at Town Meeting itself (see Section 3.1 of report).
Priority Tier	Tier 2 - Moderate cost or coordination, still no statute change

Under this option, the Town would adopt a standard video-conferencing platform (Zoom) to allow residents to watch and speak into pre-Town-Meeting informational hearings and Selectboard business remotely, layered onto the AV setup the Town already uses. Because Vermont's Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. §312(a)(2)) already permits electronic participation for boards and committees, this option would formalize and standardize a practice that is legally well-supported for that context.

Measured against the Committee's evaluation criteria, the main appeal is participation: it removes the single biggest access barrier — having to travel to and sit through an in-person meeting — for caregivers, residents with mobility limitations, seasonal residents, and people who work evenings, and it can be implemented largely with existing resources if the Town reuses its current computer, webcam, and microphone. The open questions are administrative and procedural rather than financial: someone still needs to host and troubleshoot the platform on meeting day, and this option does not by itself resolve whether remote participation could extend to voting at the Town Meeting floor session itself, as distinct from Selectboard and committee business.

C1. Expand existing ORCA Media partnership (two-way remote comment + dedicated TM archive page)

Category	C. AV, Livestreaming & Recording
Value Proposition	Builds on a no-new-vendor civic asset already covering Waterbury Selectboard/DRB/Utility District meetings and past Town Meetings. Most directly lets remote residents participate, not just watch.
Technical Support	ORCA Media staff operate coverage via Event Coverage Request form. Contact: (802) 224-9901, info@orcamedia.net, 62 Ridge St., Montpelier VT.
Repair / Maintenance	ORCA Media owns/maintains its own production equipment — no town maintenance burden.
Warranty	N/A — service relationship with member-supported nonprofit, not town-purchased equipment.
Approx. Cost	Standard government-meeting coverage typically included for member towns; confirm cost (if any) of adding two-way remote comment.
Vermont / Legal Notes	Supports Open Meeting Law recording/posting requirements (1 V.S.A. §312(a)(6)) at no incremental cost.
Priority Tier	Tier 1 - Low-cost, no statute change, pilot-ready for March 2027

This option asks ORCA Media — the public-access media nonprofit that already records and streams Waterbury Selectboard, Development Review Board, and Utility District meetings, and has recorded past Town Meetings — to add two features: two-way remote public comment routed from the livestream into the floor microphone, and a dedicated, easy-to-find Town Meeting archive page. It builds on an existing civic relationship rather than introducing a new vendor.

From a participation and communication standpoint, this is one of the more direct ways to let residents who cannot attend in person actually take part rather than simply watch after the fact, and it reinforces the Town's existing Open Meeting Law recording and posting obligations at little or no additional cost. The tradeoff is that the Town does not control ORCA Media's capacity or timeline, so the pace and scope of any enhancement depends on ORCA's willingness and resources, and the cost (if any) of the two-way comment feature specifically has not yet been confirmed.

B1. Handheld / app-based "clicker" voting for floor Town Meeting articles

Category	B. Electronic Voting & Ballot Tabulation
Value Proposition	Speeds up close/contested votes; produces an instant itemized digital tally instead of voice vote or hand count; reduces disputes. Flagged in Committee's own research (MA practice).
Technical Support	Vendor business-hours phone/email support; optional on-site setup assistance for first event.
Repair / Maintenance	Battery charging/firmware updates for keypads; rental shifts this to vendor entirely.
Warranty	Purchased keypads: 1-2 yr manufacturer warranty; rentals covered under rental agreement.
Approx. Cost	Rental for single annual event: ~$500-$3,000/event. Outright purchase of 150-300+ keypads + base station: can exceed $20,000-$40,000 — rental likely more cost-effective for once-a-year use.
Vermont / Legal Notes	Changes how a floor vote is recorded — review with Town Moderator and VLCT Municipal Assistance Center against Title 17 vote-recording/reconsideration rules before finalizing.
Priority Tier	Tier 3 - Requires a written legal opinion before recommending

This option would introduce handheld keypads or a smartphone-based polling app so that registered voters at the floor session could cast a vote electronically on a contested article, producing an instant, itemized digital tally in place of a voice vote, show of hands, or hand-counted paper ballot. It was raised in the Committee's own research as a practice used in some Massachusetts towns.

The clearest benefit is administrative efficiency: it can meaningfully speed up close or contested votes and reduce disputes over an unclear voice vote or hand count, which speaks directly to the Committee's charge to streamline the legislative process. The significant open issue is legal rather than technical — Vermont statute (17 V.S.A. §2658) is silent on electronic vote-counting devices for ordinary floor votes, neither authorizing nor prohibiting them, so this option would need to be formally adopted in advance through town rules of procedure or a warned article, and confirmed in writing with the Town Moderator and VLCT's Municipal Assistance Center, before it could be used to satisfy the statute's paper-ballot fallback if seven voters demand one.

C2. Portable sound reinforcement (wireless mics + speakers) for Town Meeting venue

Category	C. AV, Livestreaming & Recording
Value Proposition	Makes floor debate audible throughout a full gym/auditorium; improves audio quality of the ORCA Media recording; addresses a common "can't hear the back of the room" complaint.
Technical Support	AV integrator/dealer provides installation help + phone support; optional annual service contracts.
Repair / Maintenance	Low — mainly battery/mic-capsule upkeep; annual pre-Town-Meeting check recommended.
Warranty	Typically 1-3 yr manufacturer warranty on wireless mic/speaker hardware.
Approx. Cost	~$2,000-$6,000 purchase for a gym/auditorium-sized system — get 2-3 quotes from regional VT AV contractors.
Vermont / Legal Notes	Facilities/procurement decision; no Town Meeting procedure issue.
Priority Tier	Tier 1 -Low-cost, no statute change, pilot-ready for March 2027

This option would equip the Town Meeting venue with a portable wireless microphone and speaker system sized to a full gym or auditorium, so that floor debate is audible throughout the room and captured more clearly for the ORCA Media recording.

It addresses a recurring, low-controversy complaint — that attendees toward the back of the hall struggle to hear the discussion — and improves the experience and quality of participation for everyone already in the room, while also improving the audio quality of the recording for remote viewers. The main consideration is a one-time capital cost in the low-to-mid four figures, plus modest annual upkeep (mainly batteries and microphone capsules); unlike some other options, it does not by itself change who can participate, only the quality of participation for those in attendance.

D1. Assistive listening system (hearing loop or FM/digital)

Category	D. Accessibility & Language Access
Value Proposition	Concrete, low-controversy accessibility improvement for residents with hearing loss / telecoil hearing aids — addresses the Committee's own “ADA Accessibility” agenda item.
Technical Support	Supported by the AV dealer/installer that sells the system; often bundled with C2.
Repair / Maintenance	Low for a passive hearing loop; moderate for FM/digital receivers (battery upkeep, cleaning between uses).
Warranty	Typically 1-2 yrs on transmitter/amplifier hardware; receivers often same term.
Approx. Cost	~$2,000-$8,000 depending on venue size and system type — bundle quote with C2.
Vermont / Legal Notes	Supports ADA effective-communication obligations; no VT-specific statute beyond general public-accommodation requirements.
Priority Tier	Tier 1 - Low-cost, no statute change, pilot-ready for March 2027

This option would add an assistive listening system — either a passive induction hearing loop or an FM/digital transmitter with individual receivers — so that residents with hearing loss or telecoil-equipped hearing aids can receive the floor audio directly and clearly. It responds to the ADA accessibility item already on the Committee's agenda and is often quoted and installed alongside the sound-reinforcement system in Option C2.

This is a concrete, targeted accessibility improvement that supports the Town's ADA effective-communication obligations without touching voting rights or procedures, and bundling the quote with C2 may reduce incremental cost and vendor coordination. Because the benefit is targeted to residents who need assistive listening specifically, it should be weighed as a complement to — not a substitute for — broader participation options, and FM/digital receiver systems carry modest ongoing maintenance (battery upkeep and cleaning between uses) that a passive hearing loop does not.

D2. Live captioning of the meeting and livestream

Category	D. Accessibility & Language Access
Value Proposition	Makes the meeting accessible to Deaf/hard-of-hearing residents; improves comprehension of the recording for everyone.
Technical Support	Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART): contracted human service, billed/scheduled per session. AI captioning: standard vendor technical support.
Repair / Maintenance	N/A — no town-owned hardware either way.
Warranty	N/A (service/software, not hardware).
Approx. Cost	CART: hourly with minimum session length (commonly $120-$200+/hr). AI captioning: often low-cost or already included on major streaming platforms — ask ORCA Media first.
Vermont / Legal Notes	Supports ADA/effective-communication practice; no VT-specific statute beyond general accessibility obligations.
Priority Tier	Tier 1 (ask ORCA first) - Low-cost, no statute change, pilot-ready for March 2027

This option would add real-time captioning of the meeting and its livestream, either through a contracted human CART (captioning) provider for the highest accuracy, or an AI-based captioning service at lower cost.

Captioning makes the meeting accessible to Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents and improves comprehension of the recording for everyone, particularly during a sometimes-noisy floor debate — a clear communication and accessibility benefit. The two approaches trade off differently: CART is billed per session with a minimum charge, which adds a predictable but recurring cost, while AI captioning is often lower-cost or already bundled into major streaming platforms but can be less accurate during cross-talk. Before budgeting for either, the Committee should confirm with ORCA Media whether captioning is already available on the Town's existing livestream setup.

D3. AI real-time translation for non-English-speaking residents (e.g., Wordly / wordly.ai)

Category	D. Accessibility & Language Access
Value Proposition	Serves participation/equity goals for residents whose first language isn't English, without pre-booking a human interpreter per language, and without the lead time that requires.
Technical Support	All tiers include setup & support; higher tiers add optional Premium Onboarding & Support (guided setup, admin training, glossary creation, rehearsal testing, presenter coaching, live event support).
Repair / Maintenance	N/A — cloud service, no town-owned hardware.
Warranty	N/A (SaaS).
Approx. Cost	Tiered annual-hour packages (Starter =10 hrs/yr up to Enterprise =500+ hrs/yr); pay only for minutes used, no rounding up. A ~2-4 hr Town Meeting fits inside the smallest tier. Nonprofit/education/volume/multi-year discounts advertised — confirm municipal eligibility.
Vermont / Legal Notes	No known VT-specific barrier. Vendor advertises SOC 2 Type II / ISO 27001 certification and references GDPR/HIPAA — confirm data-handling terms in writing before adoption.
Priority Tier	Tier 1 (pilot) - Low-cost, no statute change, pilot-ready for March 2027

This option would add a cloud-based AI live-translation and captioning service — Wordly is used here as a concrete, currently available example — so that non-English-speaking residents could follow the meeting through translated captions or spoken audio, without the Town needing to pre-book a human interpreter for each language that might be needed.

The main appeal is participation and equity for residents whose first language isn't English, and the service is structured to make a low-commitment pilot feasible: the smallest published tier covers more hours per year than a single Town Meeting would use, and billing is by the minute rather than a flat annual license. Because Waterbury has not yet documented demand for this specific service, and because the vendor's data-handling terms (SOC 2 / ISO 27001 / GDPR and HIPAA references) would need to be confirmed in writing and municipal nonprofit-rate eligibility verified, this option is best treated as a pilot to evaluate rather than a settled recommendation.

Tier	Description
Tier 1	Low-cost, no statute change, pilot-ready for March 2027
Tier 2	Moderate cost or coordination, still no statute change
Tier 3	Requires a written legal opinion before recommending

Suggested Next Steps

• Contact ORCA Media (info@orcamedia.net, 802-224-9901) to scope what's already possible on the existing feed before budgeting anything new.

• Request a written read from VLCT's Municipal Assistance Center on the remote-participation-vs-remote-voting distinction for Town Meeting itself.

• Request quotes from 2-3 regional AV integrators for combined sound reinforcement + assistive listening for the Town Meeting venue.

• Pilot an AI captioning/translation tool at a lower-stakes public meeting before March 2027 to validate accuracy and workflow.

Toner's Audio/video Electronics	902-893-0195	6 Begnoche Dr. Swanton, VT 05488
Fuzzbuzz Technologies	802- 399-2133	41 Commerce Ave, So. Burlington, VT 05403
AV Innovations, LLC	Luke Office: (802) 875-7235 Cell: (802) 245-4093 Email: Luke@vtavi.com	211 Main Street, Ludlow, Vermont 05149, United States
	Riley Office: (802) 875-7235 Cell: (802) 379-8867 Email: Riley@vtavi.com	145 South Main Street, Chester, VT 05143