

## **PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES FOR JANUARY 20, 2024 TOWN MEETING REVIEW**

**PRESENT ONLINE:** Brian McChesney, John Zaber, Leslie Taylor, Margie Ramsell, Marina C., Nicole Jones, Ross M., Steve Moffatt, Daniel Solomon, Jane Solomon, Judy Davis,

**PRESENT (IN PERSON):** William Day, Paige Hartsell, Carol Ceraldi, Laurie Guillion Lindwall, Nancy Frohwein, Penelope Doherty, Lori Mathez, Jane Marlin, Paul Gruhler, Kristy Lamaare, Joe LaMare, Don Houghton, Mabel Houghton, Med Houston, Molly Ciecierski and children, Lalee Bond, Seth Bond, Amelia Fritz, Tony Jones, Farley Brown, Cheryl Bailey, Kris Coville, Martha Thomas, Lou Thomas, Marcy Mastin, Serin Decherd, Jerry Rayla

**Zoom Moderator:** Wendy Turnbull

**At the Selectboard Table:** Jeannine Young (Town Moderator), Susan Houston (Selectboard), Jim Jones (Selectboard), Bruce Urie (Selectboard) and Michelle Warren (Town Clerk/Treasurer)

Jim called meeting to order at 10:10am. Jim asked the Freedom & Unity Task Force to stand up, to acknowledge and thank them for their assistance with the meeting, with the complimentary breakfast foods and beverages.

**Article 1:** To elect a Town Moderator.

**Article 2:** To hear the Auditors' report.

**Article 3:** To elect all Town Officers required by law:

Select Board Member for a term of 3 years

Lister for a term of 3 years

Auditor for a term of 3 years

Cemetery Commissioner for a term of 5 years

Trustee of Public Funds for a term of 3 years

WWII Memorial Fund Trustee for a term of 3 years

Comments: John Z suggested that the Town has interested people send a write up about themselves for the position. Bruce said if the Australian Ballot goes through for elected officers, they would need to fill out a consent form ahead of time.

As requested, Bruce described the offices. Cheryl explained the auditor position in more detail.

Carol C. suggested the Selectboard post on FPF between now and Town Meeting what each positions entails.

**Article 4:** Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$960,863.00 of which \$648,292.17 shall be raised by taxes and \$312,570.83 by non-tax revenues?

Comments:

Bruce mentioned that we received 2 extra State road aid payments in 2023, so will only get 2 state road aid payments instead of 4 for 2024. They sent to towns early last year to help with flooding costs. Penelope said the State may pay more of State Relief to help towns. Jim said with the extra state payments for roads, we didn't have to borrow funds.

Bruce said right now \$214,462 out of pocket, plus the road crew time and equipment so \$300,000-\$350,000 plus 2 mitigation projects, town garage bridge and Town Line Road. The bridge will probably be \$500,000 to a million, 3 years out. Penelope said FEMA will pay 75% of that, the remaining 25% will be split between Town and State. State may bring up the reimbursement to 90%.

Serin understood the increase in wages, asked if the crushed stone budget was enough. Bruce explained there was work on 2 grants, Grant in Aid & Better Back Roads for ditching, will be reimbursed later this year. He said salaries are going up, to be competitive. We have very experience road crew with Steve M. 38 years, Kent similar and Steve P is about 5 years now. Kent will be retiring this year, not easy job to be plowing at 1 am in the morning, especially when one truck is down for repairs.

**Article 5:** Shall the Town appropriate \$65,000 to the Craftsbury Fire Department for payment of necessary expenses from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024?

Comments: Bruce said it's level funded this year.

**Article 6:** Shall the Town appropriate \$10,000 to the Craftsbury Fire Department for paying stipends to its volunteers?

Comments: Kris asked if this was enough. Bruce said they have been struggling the last few years with dwindling fire department membership. He said the reason probably had more to do with time commitment requirements, not the stipend amount.

**Article 7:** Shall the Town vote the sum of \$12,400 for the following appropriations?

\$1,500 Craftsbury Block Party Fund

\$6,400 Craftsbury Cemeteries, for mowing

\$2,500 Craftsbury Recreation Committee, with \$1,500 allocated to swimming lessons in Greensboro

\$ 500 Craftsbury Historical Society

\$1,500 Craftsbury Village Improvement Society, for maintenance on the Common

**TOTAL \$12,400**

Comments: Jeannine explained that any of these can be amended on the floor.

**Article 8:** Shall the Town vote the sum of \$7,000 for the Craftsbury Conservation Fund, money set aside for future conservation projects?

Comments: Susan explained the fund in more detail.

**Article 9:** Shall the Town vote the sum of \$6,000 for Craftsbury Saplings, a community children's center?

Comments: Jerry R asked if that was enough. Michelle said it's what they asked for.

**Article 10:** Shall the Town vote the sum of \$ 12,000 for Craftsbury Community Care Center, a residential care home providing support to elders?

Comments: Bruce said level funded.

**Article 11:** Shall the Town vote the sum of \$ 13,700 for the following appropriations?

\$ 4,500 Greensboro Nursing Home

\$ 4,200 Orleans Essex V.N.A. & Hospice for providing services to the elderly, homebound and chronically ill

\$ 5,000 Hardwick Area Food Pantry and the expanded Craftsbury Food Share

**TOTAL \$13,700**

Comments:

Michelle mentioned that Greensboro Nursing Home was up \$2,000 from last year and Hardick Food Pantry was up \$2,500

**Article 12:** Shall the Town vote the sum of \$ 14,098 for the following appropriations:

\$ 1,000 Aware for preventing and healing the trauma of domestic and sexual violence

\$ 1,200 Green Mountain Farm to School, Inc. for providing fresh, local food and nutrition education to students in Northern Vermont

\$ 1,500 Lamoille County Mental Health Services

\$ 1,000 Lamoille Family Center for parent and child programming services designed to promote health, safe and resilient families

\$ 500 North Country Animal League

\$ 650 N.E. Kingdom Council on Aging

\$ 1,266 Northeast Kingdom Human Services, for supporting community members with mental health, addiction and developmental disabilities

\$ 300 Northeast Kingdom Learning Services

\$ 1,142 Northeastern Vermont Development Assoc. (NVDA) for planning, developing, promoting and publicizing resources

\$ 500 Northwoods Stewardship Center, for widespread conservation and educational services

\*\*\* \$ 700 Old Stone House Museum, for maintaining the Old Stone House Museum and its programs

\$ 500 Orleans County Fair

\$ 500 Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter

\$ 1,500 Rural Arts, for supporting programs, activities and projects for Craftsbury families

\$ 600 Rural Community Transportation for providing public transportation services in Northern Vermont

\$ 500 Salvation Farms for distributing produce from local farms to the region's residents

\$ 140 VT Center for Independent Living  
\$ 500 VT Assoc. for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
\$ 100 VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force

**TOTAL \$ 14,098**

Comments: Michelle thinks they were all level funded.

**Article 13:** Shall the Town appropriate a sum of \$25,880 to the Hardwick Rescue Squad, Inc.?

Comments: Bruce said it's based on the number of calls.

**Article 14:** Shall the Town appropriate a sum of \$47,700 for the operation of the Craftsbury Public Library for the ensuing year?

Comments: Bruce said it's up just a hair this year.

**Article 15:** Shall the Town appropriate a sum \$800 Orleans County Citizens Advocacy (ConnectABILITIES) for creating and supporting relationships between community volunteers and individuals with developmental disabilities

**Article 16:** Shall the Town elect its town officers by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §2680(b)?

Comments: Bruce said hoping people feel they have a voice. Carole said if Australian Ballot, can't change like floor vote. Jerry R said only if votes say yes to Australian ballot.

Brian asked for a written statement, request what the person running for office, hopes to establish. Michelle said can't require legally. Penelope said we can ask though, leave blank ones who don't want to.

**Article 17:** Shall the town vote that taxes be payable in installments, with due dates being July 15<sup>th</sup>, September 15<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> (§32 V.S.A.4871), will bear interest at a rate of 1% percent per month or fraction thereof for the first three months and thereafter 1½% percent per month or fraction thereof, from November 15<sup>th</sup>, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4873?

Comments after the Articles were read:

Brian asked about the School warning, elementary lot to for the NEK Broadband to put a concrete pad there, Michelle thinks they have signed already.

Bruce suggested seeking a friend to bring to the meeting, need more participation to compare to the over 400 votes for town articles during COVID and Australian Ballet.

Jerry R. suggested we put the Town Statement in the Town Report. Cheryl pointed out has been in there, and is this year as well.

The Freedom & Unity Task force is working on transportation and offering child care for Town Meeting.

Jeannine suggested maybe Craftsbury could alternate years, one year Australian Ballot, another year floor vote, not sure if possible.

Bruce mentioned tightening up the Open Meeting Law, Norwich has recently been sued over it.

The Selectboard mentioned having committee chairs come and talk with Selectboard every few months.

Tony Jones said with COVID and sickness, it may keep numbers down still.

Meeting adjourned approximately 11:30am.

Submitted by,

Michelle Warren