

Town of Wheelock
Remote Public Informational Meeting
Town Meeting Australian Ballot 2021
Monday, February 22, 2021
6:00 PM
DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Call to Order. Meeting Called to Order: 6:05 PM

Present. In Attendance: Ann Lawless (SB Chair), Bobbie Jo Norcross (SB), Dr. Peter Miller (Moderator), Vanessa Seguin (TC), Kingdom Access TV, News7, Enid Ellis, Bill Ellis Ruth Marquette, Malcolm Bisson, Atti Seguin, Laurie (?). SB member Ryan Hanrahan not present.

Meeting called to order by A. Lawless.

Introduction. Made by A. Lawless, Selectboard Chair.

The purpose of the informational meeting is to discuss the articles on the warning (the "Warning") and ultimately the Australian Ballot for Town Meeting 2021. The meeting is being held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and pursuant to Act 162 of the Open Meeting Law which allows for public bodies to meet remotely for such purposes. Thank you to Peter Miller, Moderator, to add a sense of normalcy to the meeting. Thank you to KATV for recording and broadcasting the meeting on their cable channel and Youtube Channel.

Ground Rules: A. Lawless asked participants to remain muted unless they otherwise wish to participate in the discussion portion of each article. A. Lawless asked those wishing to be heard to make some indication, so as not to speak over anyone else.

If the meeting fails due to technology, the Board will warn and reschedule an additional meeting prior to Town Meeting Day on March 2, 2021.

Town officials present at the meeting introduced themselves.

Article 1 & 2: **Town Officers.** P. Miller read Articles 1 and 2 on the Warning. BJ. Norcross discussed Ryan Hanhranan's indication not to accept the SB term if he should be the majority vote.

Article 3 : **General Fund Budget.** P. Miller read Article 3 on the Warning. A. Lawless discussed that the Board held three budget meetings in December with an attempt to decrease the budgets as much as possible, while still being equitable and fair. She also stated that the Town has a significantly lower cash on hand basis this year. A. Lawless stated budget decreases in the General Fund were attributable to lower office expenses; and budget increases were attributable to pay increases for employees whose wages remained comparably low.

V. Seguin began discussion with regard to the Town's cash on hand as of January 1, 2021. V. Seguin stated that upon research she found that the delinquent tax collector brought in approximately \$60,000 in delinquent taxes in December of 2019 which contributed to the Town's larger cash on hand at the beginning of 2020. For

comparison, V. Seguin stated that in December of 2020 the delinquent tax collector brought in approximately \$34,000.

Article 4: Highway Fund Budget. P. Miller read Article 4 on the Warning. A. Lawless discussed that the Board tried to maintain the budget, and stated that last year came in under Budget. She also stated that the Board has tried to maintain a compensation package similar to towns around us which is reflected in the current proposed budget. She attributed budget decreases to the following: reduced temporary road crew staffing (Town now has a 2 person road crew) among other smaller cuts.

Malcolm stated he was sad to see the budget cut, but will work with the budget the best he can. He thanked Dean Davis for his work for the Town.

Peter Miller asked about the sand supply for winter roads. A. Lawless stated that the budget is \$1500 less this year. Malcolm says if the sand pile holds out as good as it has been, a budget of \$16500 should be fine.

V. Seguin discussed the line item entitled “employee health insurance town share”, which item came in under budget last year; however the Board proposes the same budget this year because the Town’s new employee elected to take that benefit.

Article 5. Property Tax Due Date. P. Miller read Article 5 of the Warning. V. Seguin stated that normally Article 5 and 6 are combined in a floor vote at Town Meeting. This year they were broken out due to the Australian Ballot voting method.

Article 6. Property Tax Penalty & Interest. P. Miller read Article 6 of the Warning. No discussion.

Article 7. Thirty Day Grace Period for Delinquent Taxes. P. Miller read Article 7 of the Warning. P. Miller stated he doesn’t remember this being on the warning before. V. Seguin stated that Emily Purdy, Delinquent Tax Collector, requested said grace period of 1% penalty instead of 7% for the first month post tax due date.

Article 8. Town Hall Project Reserve Fund. P. Miller read Article 8 of the Warning. A. Lawless discussed special appropriations for reserve funds as a whole. The Board felt that it was important to contribute to these funds.

V. Seguin stated the Town used last year’s appropriation of \$30,000 to pay off the existing Town Hall loan – resulting in a lower fund balance of this particular reserve.

A. Lawless also stated that they are making progress on the Town Hall Accessibility project.

Article 9. Bridge Repair, Replacement and or Major Road Repair. P. Miller read Article 9 of the Warning. A. Lawless stated that funding this account now may be beneficial in the future as matching funds down the road for grants. P. Miller asked if

there were any planned in the upcoming year. A. Lawless stated there are 3 needy bridges in Town. M. Bisson said the Stannard Mtn. Bridge (A. Lawless noted a state grant has been applied for) is a high priority, as well as the Minister Hill bridge. He stated that with respect to the Peak Road twin bridges, the bridge off 122 (Peak Road) isn't that old; no assessments regarding the condition to date.

Article 10. Road Equipment Replacement Fund. P. Miller read Article 10 of the Warning. M. Bisson stated there are needs and the loader does need to be replaced. High priority. A. Lawless noted that last year the Town voted to put \$37,000 into this fund. This year the Board proposed \$25,000; reason being keeping in mind the burden on the tax payers.

6: 50 PM Emily Purdy, Delinquent Tax Collector, joined the meeting.

Article 11. Town Garage Reserve Fund. P. Miller read Article 11 of the Warning. A. Lawless stated the Town voted to put \$35,000 in said fund last year. This year it was reduced to about half; reason being keeping in mind the burden on the tax payers. M. Bisson began discussion regarding improvements to the garage. V. Seguin asked where the reserve funds would get us in terms of improving the existing structure. M. Bisson discussed previous failed plans. C. Bisson mentioned the porta potty issue. A. Lawless brought up the Town Hall accessibility issue that the Department of Justice has been pressing the Town on. She stated that the Municipal Planning Grant is allowing for the aid of concepts to be developed for the parcel the Town Hall sits on, and she believes #1 there is room for a Town Garage, and #2 it is wise to consider both needs when developing the future plans. She stated there are three design concepts proposed.

A. Seguin inquired about the "three proposed concepts". A. Lawless stated that the three concepts being drawn up are completely grant funded; and more concepts may cost more taxpayer dollars.

V. Seguin asked how can we address the needs of our Town Garage now to make for better working environment for the Town Employees. Are there temporary fixes that can be made? Can these funds be used for that?

P. Miller stated that is clear there are some more emergent needs that need to be made now. A. Seguin asked how to get his ideas to the Selectboard; he asked if because the conceptual plans are in place, is it worthwhile? A. Lawless replied that concepts are being developed during the municipal planning grant project. All ideas are welcome; the more different viewpoints are represented the better the solution will be.

E. Ellis asked A. Seguin to join the Facilities Task Force Committee.

BJ Norcross stated the Board should move forward with getting bids on the roof.

E. Ellis stated whatever funds are expended now on the existing town garage, will decrease the fund in 5-10 years when the Town decides to build new.

Article 12. Repair of Sulpher Spring Pavilion. P. Miller read Article 12 of the Warning. BJ Norcross stated Town's people need to decide if they want to repair the

structure. There is a possibility the roller could be loaned to the Peacham Museum to be put on display. Should we repair a building with nothing under it?

V. Seguin stated that if this passes, we will have to raise an amount equal to \$5000 in taxes and it would have to be set aside as reserved for this purposes only.

7:20 PM Malcolm Bisson leaves meeting.

Article 13. **Lyndon Rescue, Inc. Appropriation.** P. Miller read Article 13 of the Warning. V. Seguin stated the appropriation is nearly the same as last year.

Article 14. **Sheffield Wheelock Fire Department.** P. Miller read Article 14 of the Warning. A. Lawless pointed out their Report on Page 21-22 of the Annual Report, together with a copy of the award the Department received.

Article 15. **Sheffield Wheelock Transfer Station.** P. Miller read Article 15 of the Warning. A. Lawless noted that there's a Report on page 20. Wheelock's share of the budget is reflect on page 17, line 100 of the Annual Report. E. Ellis asked about a budget for imprinted trash bags. A. Lawless believes the bags have been purchased in bulk and there is possibly no need for a budgeted figure this year. Sheffield does the accounting for the SW Transfer Station.

Article 16. **Social Services Appropriations.** Ruth Marquette introduced herself on behalf of NEKHS and said thank you to the Town for their support.

Article 17. **Cobleigh Public Library.** P. Miller read Article 17 of the Warning. Library remains open during COVID-19 pandemic.

Article 18. **Kingdom Animal Shelter.** P. Miller read Article 18 of the Warning. Organization has a new building.

Additional Discussion: V. Seguin thanked everyone. P. Miller inquired about the Clark property behind the Town Hall. E. Ellis said it has been considered in prior planning and found unsuitable for a Town Hall. Too small. No parking, no easy access.

A. Lawless made motion to adjourn, Bobbie Jo second. So voted.

Adjourn 7:45.

Ann Lawless

Submitted by: Vanessa Seguin, Clerk

Bobbie Jo Norcross