

Annual Town Meeting
March 28, 2022
7PM
Rochester High School Auditorium

The legal voters of the Town of Rochester, County of Windsor, State of Vermont, are hereby notified and warned to meet in the Rochester School Auditorium, 222 South Main Street, in said town on Monday, March 28, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. to transact the following business:

Current Moderator Dan McKinley was not available to attend the annual Town Meeting. Ethan Bowen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. He noted we will go through the warning and to review the amended warning, which will have some changed numbers on article 5. Public comments will be held to 5 minutes. Ethan read the Annual Town Meeting Warning.

Article 1. To elect a moderator for the ensuing year. Doon nominated Dan McKinley to hold the position for the upcoming year. The article was moved by Burma Cassidy-Wissner and seconded by Barbara Shenton. Doon appointed Ethan be a replacement for tonight's meeting. All in favor. So, voted.

Article 2. To elect all Town Officers required by law:

1. To elect a Selectboard Member ~ 3-year term
2. To elect a Town Clerk for a 3-year term.
3. To elect a Town Treasurer for a 3-year term.
4. To elect a Lister for a 3-year term.
5. To elect a Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a 1-year term.
6. To elect a Library Trustee for a 5-year term.
7. To elect a Library Trustee to the remaining 1-year balance of a 5-year term.
8. To elect a Trustee of Public Funds for a 3-year term.
9. To elect a Cemetery Commissioner for a 5-year term.

Martha Slater nominated Doon Hinderyckx as a selectboard member to run for a three-year term. Kathryn Schenkman seconded the nomination. No further nominations. Walter Gaulb moved to close. Lois Bond seconded. All in favor. Ethan called the clerk to submit one ballot in the name of Doon Hinderyckx. So, voted.

Nancy Woolley nominated Julie Smith as Town Clerk. Mason Wade seconded. No further nominations. Lois Bond moved to close. All in favor of closing nominations. All in favor of Julie Smith nominated as Town clerk for a three-year term. Ethan called the clerk to submit one ballot in the name of Julie Smith. So, voted.

Joanne McDonnell nominated Julie Smith as Town Treasurer for a three-year term. Seconded by Susie Smolen. No further nominations. Ethan entertained a motion to close nominations. Kelly Kelly moved for no further nominations. Seconded by Dane Coolley. All in favor. All in favor of Julie Smith as Town Treasurer for three-year term. Ethan instructed clerk to submit one ballot in the name of Julie Smith. So, voted.

Martha nominated Caroline Meagher to succeed herself. Jessica Arsenault seconded. No further nominations. All in favor. So, voted. Caroline Meagher is a lister for a 3-year term

Kristen LaPell nominated Rebecca Klein as the Delinquent Tax Collector for a one-year term. Burma Cassidy-Wissner seconded. No further nominations. All in favor of Becky Klein as Delinquent Tax Collector. So, voted.

Brenda Goupee nominated Barbara Shenton as the Library Trustee for a 5-year term. Susie Smolen seconded. No further nominations. All in favor. So, voted

Diane White nominated Doreen Jones to fulfill the remaining 1-year balance of a 5-year term as the Library Trustee. Barbara Shenton seconded. No further nominations. All in favor. So, voted.

Nancy Woolley nominated Sandy Pierce as a Trustee of Public Funds for a 3-year term. Seconded by Kathryn Schenkman. No further nominations. All in favor. So, voted.

Tom Paquette nominated Michele Schnabel as a Cemetery Commissioner for a 5-year term. Nancy Woolley seconded. No further nominations. All in favor. So, voted.

Ethan thanked all the candidates for serving.

Article 3. Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect current taxes, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. §4791?

Barb Shenton moved the article. Burma Cassidy-Wissner seconded the article. No discussion. All in favor. So, voted.

Article 4. Shall the voters authorize payment of real taxes in four (4) installments, with due dates being Monday, August 15, 2022, Monday, November 15, 2022, Wednesday, February 15, 2023, and Monday, May 15, 2023, by physical delivery to the tax collector before 4:00 PM on those dates with postmarks not accepted as proof of delivery?

Kelly Kelly moved the article to the floor and was seconded by Robert Meagher. No discussion. All in favor. So, voted.

Article 5. Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of \$ 1,295,460 of which \$ 864,807 shall be raised by taxes?

Ethan read the original article Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of \$ 1,397,011 of which \$966,359 shall be raised by taxes. Lois Bond moved the article. Robert Meagher seconded. Doon proposed amending article 5 of the total expenditures to \$1,295,460 of which \$864,807 shall be raised by taxes. Doon explained the discrepancy. He explained the original number is including all the appropriations and articles. He said in doing so we would be double voting on the articles and appropriations. Robert Meagher seconded the proposal. No further discussion on the amendment. All in favor. So, amended. Ethan read the

amended article once more. Mason asked if he could ask a question about the budget. Mason noted he was disappointed to not see a letter from the Trustees of Public Funds explaining which way we are headed with the investments, especially after the climate initiative that we passed in 2020. He thought it would be good to see how town officials publicly relate to that. Doon asked for a trustee to explain. Sandy explained the investment personnel are local, live in Vermont, work for a Bank. She said they have tried to keep their investments local. She explained they invest the money where we make the best return on our money. She said they have reduced the fossil fuel investments and have quite a lot invested in solar. She is not sure what the percentage is. She said the goal is to make as much back on the returns as possible for the future of our town. Mason asked why the report was not submitted. Sandy explained the chair was away and, in the future, they will make sure one is submitted. Cindy Sutherland asked how much money is being delegated from the Trustees to the town for school, or something else. Doon noted if you look on page 27 of the Town Report it will show the Trustees will be giving the town \$72,000.00. Amy Wildt is working on the funds that go to the school. This information is separate from the town and will be discussed through the school. Discussion about the \$12,000 paid to the high school for heat was brought up. Doon noted it was used to keep the building from freezing up. Kathryn spoke to that about the feasibility study and in order for the building to be accessible to the consultants there was a condition by the school district that Rochester pay an additional \$15,000.00 to help in heating the building this year. Doon added this is money spent this year and not included in the budget we are voting on which comes into play on July 1, 2022. No further discussion. Ethan called the question. Moved by Burma Cassidy and seconded by Robert Meagher. All in favor. So, called. Ethan read the question with the amended figures. All in favor. So, passed.

Article 6. Shall the voters exempt real property in Rochester Village owned by Rochester Community Care Home, Inc., d.b.a. Park House, a non-profit tax- exempt organization providing services and housing for low income and other elderly persons from property taxes for five (5) years (FY23 – FY27), pursuant to 32 V.S.A. §3840.

Joanne McDonnell moved the article and was seconded by Kelly Kelly. Joanne McDonnell thanked everyone in town for giving the Park House the exemption to help with their budget. Walter Gaulb asked what the taxable value of the building would be. Ethan said without figures in front of us we would have to get back to him on that question. No further discussion. All in favor. So, passed.

Article 7. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 48,314 towards operating expenses of the Rochester Public Library.

Burma Cassidy-Wissner moved the article and was seconded by Suzie Smolen. Rebecca Klein complimented what a lovely library we have in Rochester. She commented that budget and finance, week after week go through line by line of the budget to find small ways to reduce amount to be raised by taxes. She thought since the library has shown a balance in their checkbook back to 2019 of unrestricted funds in the amount of over \$8,000.00 left over. In 2020 there was over \$10,000 left of unrestricted funds and in 2021 there was \$8,900 left over in the unrestricted funds. Becky noticed in the town report for this current year the trustees allotted \$4,000 to offset the money they would ask the town for. In this coming budget they are only

asking \$1200.00 to offset. She noticed one other thing, the trustees have two investment funds, the Kirkpatrick and Wing funds. The Wing fund is restricted, whereas the Kirkpatrick is unrestricted. She said in 2020 they didn't use any of the money they could have drawn out. They have a schedule to take out \$3,326.00 out of Kirkpatrick. In 2020, they didn't take out any and in 2021, they only used half. In this current budget they have not used any and asked if they had. Barb Shenton stated they had not. Becky Klein said they have only 3 more months to go. Becky Klein made a motion to amend the library's appropriation to \$44,314.00. Lois Bond seconded the motion. Walter Gaulb was not in favor because of the buildings aging process. Cindy Sutherland responded that she is opposed to the amendment. Jeff Gephart spoke about the town Building audits in the point of saving energy. He spoke about the deterioration of the building and the exterior of work needed to stabilize and save the building. Becky shared that the budget of the library is an operating budget. She knows there is \$36,000 in an annual campaign and didn't know if it was earmarked for the building. Bud Venturini noted in the past few years have been less than usual when it comes to operations. Its hard to base number this coming year based on the past few years. Ethan read the amendment change. Took it to vote. The article was defeated. Mason Wade amended the amount of the library article to increase to \$50,000.00. Burma Cassidy-Wissner seconded it. Barb Shenton spoke thanking everyone for voting her in. She wanted to clarify that the townspeople understand the building is owned by the town and has the building reserve fund. Voting the money into the library's budget wouldn't necessarily be going to pay for the building. No further discussion. Ethan read the amended article raising the library budget to \$50,000. Took it to vote. The amendment was defeated. Ethan stated we are back to the original article. All in favor. So, passed.

Article 8. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 20,400 to continue funding the "Fast Trash" and Recycling program from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023.

Amy Wildt moved the motion. Kelly Kelly seconded. Joanne McDonnell asked if Hancock or Granville chip in anything towards it? Doon explained they pay separately to ABLE Waste. They don't pay it to Rochester, they pay directly to ABLE. No further discussion. All in favor. So, passed.

Article 9. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow an amount not to exceed \$ 105,080 for the purchase of a Western Star Tandem Truck for the Highway Department.

Moved by Burma Cassidy and seconded by Robert Meagher. Mason asked to define the money borrowed, and if that is the amount what is the interest? Doon noted the details can be found on page 28. The amount is not locked in just yet but thought the interest is about 2.9%. No further discussion. All in favor. Article passes

Article 10. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow an amount not to exceed \$ 65,165 for the purchase of a Ford F550 4x4 Crew Cab truck for the Fire Department.

Robert Meagher moved the article and Burma Cassidy-Wissner. No discussion. All in favor. Article 10 passes

Article 11. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 9,000 to continue funding the Town Buildings and Property Reserve Fund?

Kelly Kelly moved the article. Robert Meagher seconded it. No discussion. All in favor. So, passes.

Article 12. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 1,000 to continue funding the Tennis Reserve Fund for on-going and future court maintenance?

Moved by Robert Meagher and seconded by Susie Smolen. Mason asked why they are not included in the Rec fund budget. Doon explained the Tennis courts is town owned property and required physical upkeep. Doon shared the Rec committee budget is for activities. Mason Wade asked if the tennis courts could be moved from the flood plains. Doon said it would not have a good place or the funding to move it. No further discussion. All in favor. So, article 12 passes.

Article 13. Shall the voters vote appropriate the following sums as requested by these community agencies:

Central VT Council on Aging	3,000.00
Clara Martin Center	2,066.00
Green Up Vermont	100.00
Orange County Parent Child Center	250.00
Quintown Senior Center	9,849.00
SafeLine, Inc.	250.00
Tri-Valley Transport (formerly Stagecoach)	1,300.00
Vermont Rural Fire Hydrant	100.00
VNH – Visiting Nurse Association	4,800.00
White River Partnership	875.00
WomenSafe	250.00
Total	\$22,840.00

Robert Meagher moved the article and Amy Wildt seconded. No further discussion. All in favor. So, article passes

Article 14. To transact any other legal and proper business to be brought before said meeting.

Vic Ribauda spoke as a co-chair on behalf of committee of plan to repurpose the High School building. He updated the status of the project. He said there is a 2-page summary of the history of the project. He commented on the model of the project is to enable the building with new tenants to be self-sustaining over time with rental income, pay for the expenses to operate the building on an annual basis. There is a significant amount of work to be done to the building to make it sustainable over a period of time. The heating system, electrical panel, windows on and on. The consulting architects that are paid with the grant we received estimate the work to be about 2-

million dollars or more in the final scope of what the building will be used for. Over time we hope to find grant funds available to support. The intention is to find tenants to make a provisional commitment to come to the building contingent of the upgrades made to the building. The plans mentioned in the back of the town report are potential day adult care, childcare, makerspace, co-working offices and an art and learning hub. Vic Ribaudo shared this summer there will be a warned town meeting to hear the output of this committee's work, what recommendation will be made and put it to a town vote. There are several alternate possible scenarios for the building. One is to find a buyer and potential tenants. Another option is to be left as is. School board has no additional money to put into it. Another option is to demolish. It would be a large cost to do. One study found it could cost \$700,000 to take it down. Working toward a way to make this an asset to the town. Kathryn spoke and shared they are talking to some people who have serious interest in the building. The issue they have in terms of commitment is that the town doesn't own the building right now. They will need to submit a proposal with reliable tenants. She said in their proposal there are some components that can't really sustain that portion of the building and that is the arts. The tenants will need to pay their way. The consultants have estimated if the town were to acquire the building the costs to sustain it yearly would cost \$97,000. This amount broken down for each taxpayer looks like \$9.70 per \$100,000 in value of property. Kathryn said it's been an honor to do the work and has been many hours of work. She welcomed questions. Mason asked about the flood plains and the insurance to cover the building. Vic spoke and assured the consultants have a way to mitigate that process since only a portion of the building is in the 100-year flood plains. Cindy Sutherland asked if the Town office would be able to move to the high school and sell the town office to offset the costs. Vic said it would have to go to the selectboard and there is talk of that possibility. Diane Teetsel asked if the consultants have looked at asbestos or PCB's in remediation. Vic answered the consultants have considered that thought in their process. Rob Gardner stated said by an elder in town the decision to buy the high school is going to be one of the most important financial decision the town makes in decades. His message is public information and the importance of even the bad news shared. Kathryn shared when the full report is revealed to the town, this town will make a decision. She said it's been their job to get the information out there. Jeff Gephart asked people to stop by and pick up a copy of the climate initiative report. Walter made a comment about how he lives on Brook Street and wanted to give a shout out to the wonderful job the road crew has done this year. Ethan gave a shout out to Katie for her wonderful job of running the microphone for the evening.

Motion to adjourn. Seconded by Suzie Smolen. All in favor. So, adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23pm
Respectfully submitted,
Julie Smith