

Town of Rochester, Vermont
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Dan McKinley called the Town Meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Dan shared the invocation used in many town meetings to bring together the community and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. He reviewed the Roberts Rules of Order. Dan introduced State Representative Kirk White to share a few words. Representative Kirk White shared his roll on the House Commerce and Economic Committee. He shared how the house is focused on workforce development and all things related. He said a lot of companies that can't find enough workers are finding ways to remove blocks to get more money and training into every sector including nursing, construction, teachers, childcare providers, and education. He shared they are trying to improve career and tech education programs. They are also working on housing to help those who need jobs, and also childcare. The legislature is working groups crossing committees to help break down the barriers. He shared with economic development they are trying to find a way to help businesses get started and grow in the state. On the commerce end, they are working on insurance regulation. The Vermont Employment and Growth Incentive was a program his committee worked on to incentivize businesses to provide more jobs. The committee is also working on data privacy. They are also working on how to reduce data from being stolen and sold from users on the internet. Representative Kirk White has shared several lengthy posts on Front Porch Forum, his Facebook page and email lists. He would be happy to share and help anyone with questions.

Dan read the following: 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 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. to transact the following business:

Article 1. To elect a moderator for the ensuing year. Martha nominated Dan McKinley. No other nominations. Closed nominations. Asked clerk to cast one ballot for Dan McKinley as moderator for a 1-year term.

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

1. To elect a Selectboard Member for a 3-year term. Nancy Woolley nominated Frank Severy to succeed himself and complemented him on a fine job well done in the past three years. Pat Harvey seconded the nomination. No other nominations. Closed nominations and asked Clerk to cast one ballot for Frank Severy as selectboard member for a 3-year term.
2. To elect a Lister for a 3-year term. Jessica Arsenault nominated Louis Donnet. Frank Russell seconded the nomination. No other nominations. Closed nominations and asked clerk to cast one ballot for Louis Donnet for a 3-year term as Lister.
3. To elect a Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a 1-year term. Kristen LaPell nominated Rebecca Klein. No other nominations. Closed nominations and asked the clerk to cast one ballot for Rebecca Klein as Delinquent Tax Collector for a 1-year term.

4. To elect a Library Trustee for a 5-year term. Frank Russell nominated Doreen Jones. No other nominations. Closed nominations and asked clerk to cast one ballot for Doreen Jones as a Library Trustee for a 5-year term.
5. To elect a Trustee of Public Funds for a 3-year term. Nancy Woolley nominated Mike Harvey. No other nominations. Closed nominations and ask the clerk to cast a ballot for Michael Harvey as a Trustee of Public Funds for a 3-year term.
6. To elect a Cemetery Commissioner for a 5-year term. Nancy Woolley nominated Tom Paquette. No other nominations. Closed nominations and asked the clerk to cast a ballot for Tom Paquette as a Cemetery Commissioner for a 5-year term.

Article 3. Shall the voters authorize payment of real taxes in four (4) installments, with due dates being Tuesday, August 15, 2023, Wednesday, November 15, 2023, Thursday, February 15, 2024, and Wednesday, May 15, 2024, by physical delivery to the tax collector before 4:00 PM on those dates with postmarks not accepted as proof of delivery? Nancy Woolly move Article 3. Martha Slater seconded. No further discussion. Voted in favor. Article 3 passes.

Article 4. Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of \$ 1,313,277 of which \$ 921,967 shall be raised by taxes? Frank Russel moved the article. Seconded by Sandy Lincoln. Kevin Dougherty proposed an amendment to raise the amount \$3,248 to make up the amount Granville First Response requested for their services for the upcoming fiscal year. He said it a small amount but would be a great show of support for the volunteers. Pat read a statement she prepared. Diane White seconded the amendment and shared her positive experience with GFR responding to her emergency medical needs in a timely, professional manner. She said its not a lot of money for peace of mind. Brenda Goupee felt the board is punishing the GFR. She asked what a person's life is worth. She supports Kevin's amendment and asks that we all support. Larry Straus agreed to fund GFR's request and shared the technical point the selectboard budget is a lump sum and the selectboard is not required to spend in accordance with the individual lines of the budget. He said there is no requirement once appropriated funds in this budget article that the selectboard direct each dollar to each line item in this budget. He said it would be wise to do so, but there is no requirement to do so. He said there is a difference between transport and first response. He said they are both critical needs. Kevin McLoughlin asked how do you expect them to upgrade with less money. Doon shared the motivation on this was to bring attention and discussion to the issue. This was meant to shape things up and inspire conversation and bring attention and appreciation for what we do have. Mason Wade asked if the selectboard could ask the trust fund to help in this situation. Last year they support the heating fuel of the school building that we don't even own. Doon stated we are always asking the trustees for money. Frank made a statement for clarification of how we got to this situation. Frank Russell asked for a restatement of the amendment. Dan said the amendment is to increase the amount of Article 4 in the amount of \$3,248. The question has been

called. Voted in the affirmative to call the question. The amendment is to increase the amount of Article 4 under the authorization of the highway and general fund expenditures by increase of \$3,248. Amendment passes. The amended article reads: **Shall the voters authorize total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,316,525 of which \$925,215 shall be raised by taxes?** Jeff Gephart moved the motion. Sandy Lincoln seconded. Tim Crowley spoke and asked the selectboard what is the vehicle that we have as a community to facilitate this relationship with the folks in Granville who are really trying hard but may not be succeeding at the level we hope and lump that up with WRVA whom we already pay. He said it is an important matter and one that doesn't need to be resolved over the base over \$3,000 and missing budget meetings. He asked what is that vehicle to make sure someone is encouraging the relationship with GFR and WRVA to do what we need. Doon stated it is on the upcoming agenda to appoint a representative of the town for GFR. No further discussion. Move to vote. Article 4 passes.

Article 5. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 49,935 towards operating expenses of the Rochester Public Library? Karen moved the article. Burma Cassidy seconded the article. No discussion. Move to vote. Article 5 passes.

Article 6. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 21,420 to continue funding the North Star Recycling program from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024? Martha Slater moved the article. Seconded by Sandy Lincoln. Martha shared how lucky we are to have people there every Saturday and how kind they are to help. She said it's a great service for our town. Frank Russell shared what a great service including their trash service. No further discussion. Move to vote. Article 6 passes.

Article 7. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 8,000 to fund the Reappraisal Reserve Fund? Burma Cassidy moved the article. Seconded by Kathryn Schenkman. Frank Russell asked what the time frame is and what is triggering a reappraisal. Pat noted the State of Vermont set the tax rate for education based on the value of our property. She explained as the property values drop below a threshold, then the state will expect the town to do a reappraisal. She said in the past reappraisals were done every 10 years. The common level of appraisal has dropped to trigger a reappraisal. She said the last reappraisal was done in 2012. She shared in anticipation of that the state does fund towns with money each year. We receive about \$6000 or more a year and this article helps to bridge the gap of what we will need to complete the process. The reappraisal will be done in the next couple years. Kathryn Schenkman shared her concern of the escalation of prices of homes sold during the pandemic. She asked if this has affected the lowering or list price lower than it should be and if so what if that levels out over the next couple years will we be paying higher taxes because of property sold during the pandemic. Pat said the taxes are based on what the budget is. Taxes wouldn't in move with it. She said we are lucky because some towns have jumped way

beyond the threshold and are experiencing a large tax rate hike to their education rate because of that. No further discussion. Moved to vote. Article 7 passes.

Article 8. Shall the voters approve the creation of a SkateSpace Donation Reserve Fund and authorize transfer of the donations received from the Mascoma Bank GoFundMe Account and monies previously appropriated by the Town for SkateSpace? Martha Slater moved the article. Kathryn Schenkman seconded the motion. No discussion. Article 8 passes.

Article 9. Shall the voters approve the creation and appropriate \$ 12,000 to Highway Grant Projects Reserve Fund? Burma Cassidy moved the motion. Kevin McLoughlin seconded. Brenda Goupee asked for an explanation of the fund. Frank explained the fund was put in place by the request of the budget committee to establish a reserve fund for grants to cover the towns highway match that may go from one fiscal year to another. No further discussion. Move to vote. Article 9 passes.

Article 10. Shall the voters appropriate \$ 1,000 to fund the Tennis Reserve Fund? Barb DeHart moved the article. Seconded by Lesley Straus. No further discussion. Move to vote. Article 10 passes.

Article 11. Shall the voters vote to appropriate the following sums as requested by these community agencies: Burma Cassidy moved the article. Joe Schenkman seconded the motion. Frank Russell asked where the agencies come from. Doon noted the agencies have requested these amounts and they are level funded. No further discussion. Move to vote. Article 11 passes.

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

Article 12. To transact any other legal and proper business to be brought before said meeting. Doon made a statement currently sharing Vic Ribaud stepped down as Emergency Management Coordinator and the selectboard has been filling the role

by default. He said they are open and soliciting interested person who would like to fill that role. Dick White spoke to thank the town highway crew for great job done another year. Kathryn spoke in appreciation for Vic Ribaudo's service in the role as the Emergency Management Coordinator during COVID. Vic Ribaudo spoke on behalf of the High School Repurposing Committee whom he is a co-chair with Kathryn Schenkman. He made a statement about the 4-page report in the town report and they handed out a 2-page addendum. He asked if anyone had any questions. He said they wouldn't have a vote until later this year as the environmental reports are completed. A question was asked if there will be informational meetings about the project as it progresses. He said there would be warned meetings. Kathryn shared there are warned monthly meetings. Kathryn shared the floodway issue resolved with a property line adjustment. She shared they have receive funding in the amount of \$91,900 toward this project from various grants and agencies and private donations. She also shared the Heat Task Force has raised \$10,535 from the Rochester portion of it. Burma asked about the project manager and to share what the project manager is doing. Kathryn shared the hired project manager is Liz Currie from Common Lands to establish a road map of the project. She is not currently working in this development of the project, which is out of her expertise. Midge Scanlan spoke in sincere appreciation of all the hours Vic Ribaudo and Kathryn has put into this project. She applauded and commended them for all their hard work. Larry Plesent made a statement that he would be honored to take on the role of Emergency Management Coordinator. Cindy Sutherland asked about public bathrooms in town. Doon said the budget for porta potties increases each year in the budget to have them around town. He said there was talk about turning the old fire house into a public restroom, but its complicated. Dean Mendell invited everyone to the Hey Neighbor event on Sunday, March 12 to attend at the fire house from 11-3 to welcome new people to town and share local services at the open house. Kelly Kelly made a motion to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Smith