

Pre-Town Meeting

February 26, 2024

Present: Doon Hinderyckx, Frank Severy, Pat Harvey

Guests: Kristen LaPell, Julie Smith, Terry Severy, Nancy Woolley, Larry Plesent, Orca Media, Larry Straus, Lois Bond, John Lampert

Zoom Guests: Orca Media, Martha Slater, Troy LaPell, Louis Donnet, Nancy Vadnais, Drew Hudson, Caroline & Robert Meagher, Henry Garzia, Janice McCann, Laura Sokoloski, Hannah Rice, Burma Cassidy

Doon called the Pre-Town/Informational meeting at 6:00 pm

Doon confirmed the open meeting law conformity.

Doon asked if anyone had questions to the warning for the Town Meeting.

Doon read Article 14 pertaining to the Bond Vote for West Hill Bridge Replacement. Larry asked if the bond be raised to remove the existing bridge? The wording existing bridge is the question. Frank said the bridge was in work since 2019 with many delays and the acceptance of the project in 2023. He shared we waited to bond for additional funds available. Julie will reach out to bond counsel for clarification. Nancy shared it was the understanding that the US Forest Service was going to pay for the bulk of the project. Doon said they did pay a lot for it. Pat shared the project was at the beginning going to be paid for in full but as COVID hit and then the prices of everything inflated, we were faced with about 30% more. Frank said the original cost estimate was done in 2020. At that time, they estimated the costs at \$650,000 and we secured \$775,000. The bids fluctuated between 1.9 million and 1.2 million. We accepted the lowest bid and after reviewing their bid, they dropped their bid amount by \$100,000 so we as the Town could take on the compaction cost which cost 10-15K.

Article 13 was read. Larry Plesent asked if this was to cover a short fall. Doon explained this is to keep the budget from increasing.

Article 12 was read. Nancy explained the reason for Article 12. She explained the 10K represented an amount to allow the committee to not have to ask the town for additional funds to maintain the cemeteries in FY25. Pat shared the cemetery committee was not getting an allotment from the Trustees of Public Funds as it had in the past years. Larry Straus asked if this would liquidate the reserve fund. Nancy answered no.

Article 11 was read. Doon explained we are in line to have a town wide reappraisal in the next coming year. He said the money we receive from the State and the town has matched the amount. We are asking to transfer the town's share knowing we will have enough in the account to cover the funding for paying the reappraisal. Larry asked if the contract for the reappraisal is happening.

Article 10 was read. There was a clerical error in the amount shown. The correct amount for the article should read "Shall the voters appropriate \$21,420.00 to continue funding the North Star

Rubbish Removal, LLC recycling program from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025? The correct information can be found on page 38 of the Town Report within the budget.

Article 9 was read. This is the list of appropriation requests. Larry Plesent asked about the Park House. Pat explained the Park House is tax exempt. Doon explained they request for tax exemption on the Town Report Warning every 5 years. Nancy explained these are agencies that requested monies from the town. Larry Plesent has asked if there has been discussion of further support for Park House. Doon and Pat both shared they had not been approached. Nancy said the other towns, Pittsfield, Stockbridge, Granville, and Hancock show in their Town Reports they contribute to the Park House.

Article 8 was read. Doon explained the article in saying that it gives the town authority to offer someone tax stabilization in development or investment in developing. He said housing is a big issue right now. Larry Straus asked if this was an authority you did not have previously. Doon said they did not have this authority and this article would ask voters to give permission for this to be enacted. Nancy asked if this would stay in effect or would the town have to ask every year. Doon said this would stay in effect.

Article 7 was read. Caroline asked if this was a one-time deal or continued each year. Doon shared this must be asked yearly. She said this needs to be clear and talked about at the Town Meeting.

Article 6 was read. Doon said this is the same thing where any unused funds would roll over into their equipment reserve account. Frank explained there are sometimes supply chain issues when the fire department order fire hose or gear and can affect their budget from one year to the next as the orders are fulfilled. He said it just makes sense to have the funds transferred. This is also a yearly ask.

Article 5 was read. No questions asked.

Article 4 was read. No questions asked.

Article 3 was read. Doon asked how long it has been since the town has had the requirements for post marks. Nancy said 25 years or more. The question was asked what the purpose of that is. Frank shared the purpose is a cut off so there is a definitive line and no grey area. Nancy said it was originally set up, so it was easier for people to make four payments rather than two.

Article 2 was read. The selectboard position this year is Pat Harvey. She will be running again if nominated. The lister this year is Jessica Arsenault. The Collector of Delinquent of Taxes is Rebecca Kline. Larry Plesent asked how she is compensated. Pat said she receives a percentage of the delinquent taxes she collects. Larry asked if the taxes are higher than they have been in the past. He asked if it is a normal rate of delinquencies we carry. They seem higher this year. He asked if we had to budget for a percentage of delinquencies? Doon said we budget on the taxes. He said we cannot budget this in. Pat shared currently there are 3 properties going up for tax sale. Doon said there is a Library Trustee up for 5-year term, a Trustee of Public Funds for a 3-year term, and Cemetery Commissioner for a 5-year term.

Article 15 was read. Doon explained the board was approached by a group of people moving through the state with 130 towns that have adopted this Declaration of Inclusion. Doon suggested changing the words to include in the second to last sentence to read. As a town, we formally condemn all discrimination in all of its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community and will strive, *from this day forward*, to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures, reflect this commitment. Doon said we did not want to start digging in the past to rework historical reality. Doon said many selectboards adopted this Declaration but wanted to bring it to the town to vote on. Pat shared Governor Scott has adopted this on behalf of the State of Vermont, and she felt it could be a little redundant to have it done town by town. She said this group approaches us consistently. Larry Pleasant made a comment that “This is America, I thought that is the way it was.” The board agreed and said this is why it is going before the Town. Pat said we are not necessarily sure of what is down the road once you adopt this Declaration. She said that is the purpose to make the townspeople aware and make the decision on their own. Doon shared this is redundant, he said as a town representative we strive to ethical and avoid conflict of interest and not discriminate against anyone. Larry Straus asked if the board is suggesting someone will be proposing an amendment from the floor to Article 15 to insert the wording to include from this day forward. The board agreed.

Doon moved to adjourn the Pre-Town/Informational meeting at 6:37 pm. Pat seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Smith