

Approved Minutes

Town of Brookline Selectboard Informational Meeting Wednesday, February 23, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Attending

Selectboard:

Dot Maggio (Chair)
David Jones
Bruce Mello
Stan Noga
Gwen Tanza

Town Officers:

Guy Tanza (Town Clerk, videographer)

Members of the Public:

Jon Ballou
Vanessa Ballou
Dan Towler
Daniel Schoener
Nathaniel Hussey (SEVEDS representative)
Peter Barus (Recorder)
FACTV (Videoconference recording)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Ms. Maggio introduced all attendees.

Additions/deletions/changes to the agenda

Remote Meeting Rules of Procedure

Ms. Maggio explained the ground-rules for the remote Town Meeting conference procedures; that the Moderator would read each Article, and procedures for being recognized for public comment; the use of the chat function only for technical assistance; and that there would be no other provisions for discussion or changes before the Town Meeting vote by Australian ballot.

Review and discuss Article 1: To elect all Town Officers required by law:

- Town Moderator for a term of 1 year;
- Town Clerk for a term of 1 year;
- Town Treasurer for a term of 1 year;
- Delinquent Tax Collector for a term of 1 year;
- Selectboard Member for a term of 3 years;
- Selectboard Member for a term of 2 years;
- Lister for a term of 3 years;
- Lister for a term of 2 years (remainder of an open 3-year term);
- Lister for a term of 1 year (remainder of an open 3-year term);
- Auditor for a term of 3 years;
- Cemetery Commissioner for a term of 5 years;
- Trustee of Public Funds for a term of 1 year;

Public comment (none)

Review and discuss Article 2: Shall the Town accept the Auditors' Report?

Public comment (none)

Review and discuss Article 3: Shall the Town vote to approve the General and Highway Fund expenditures, net of non-tax budgeted revenues, for the Town as follows:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Amount to be raised by taxes for General Fund: | \$ 145,667 |
| Amount to be raised by taxes for Highway Fund: | \$ 232,367 |
| Total Municipal Taxes to be raised: | \$ 378,034 |

Public comment (none)

Review and discuss Article 4: Shall the Town authorize the collection of taxes in 4 installments, with the due dates being: August 16, 2022; November 15,

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2022; February 16, 2023; May 16, 2023

Public comment

(none)

Ms. Maggio noted that Articles 5 through 27 concerned Appropriation Requests.

Review and discuss Article 5: Shall the voters appropriate \$250.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of American Red Cross?

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 6: Shall the voters appropriate \$125.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of CRT-The Current Ct. River Transit?

Public comment

Q: Would like to know what this organization does? Ms. Maggio explained the small transportation service.

Review and discuss Article 7: Shall the voters appropriate \$300.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Grace Cottage Foundation?

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 8: Shall the voters appropriate \$50.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Green-Up Vermont?

Ms. Maggio explained the annual program for picking up litter along the roads on the first Saturday in May.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 9: Shall the voters appropriate \$300.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Groundworks Collaborative?

Ms. Maggio explained that the program in Brattleboro for people in need was requesting the same amount requested previously.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 10: Shall the voters appropriate \$250.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Historical Society of Windham County?

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 11: Shall the voters appropriate \$250.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Leland & Gray Education Foundation?

Ms. Maggio explained that L&G was the local Middle/High school in Townshend.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 12: Shall the voters appropriate \$700.00 to be raised

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by taxes in continuing support of Moore Free Library?

Ms. Maggio noted page 10 in the booklet, the appropriation request at \$400 more than last year.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 13: Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Rural Fire Protection Program?

Ms. Maggio explained the program for placing hydrants at lakes and ponds, and the two fire hydrants in the town.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 14: Shall the voters appropriate \$700.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Senior Solutions?

Ms. Maggio explained that the program provided support for senior citizens in the area, the request increased by \$50.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 15: Shall the voters appropriate \$465.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of SEVCA?

Ms. Maggio explained, Southeastern Vermont Community Action, assisting people in need.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 16: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,590.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS)?

Ms. Maggio introduced Mr. Hussey. Mr. Hussey explained, as Director of Business Acceleration, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, a partner organization concerned with providing assistance to small businesses, that students at L&G would benefit directly in the graduation plan; that the appropriation request was based on three dollars per resident (2010 Census data).

Public comment

Mr. Towler expressed misgivings about the program. Ms. Maggio explained that this was the reason for the separate Articles for appropriations; and that town officials would be taking SeVEDS seminars on grant management, etc. Mr. Hussey noted Mr. Towler's comment, and that the request was made to the voters of every town in Windham County. Ms. Maggio explained that the amount would not be subject to change, but only to up-or-down vote.

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Review and discuss Article 17: Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Southern Vermont Therapeutic Riding Center?

Public comment

Mr. Towler asked how many residents were served by the organization. Mr. Ballou expressed agreement, suggesting preference for other organizations.

Review and discuss Article 18: Shall the voters appropriate \$130.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Southeastern Watershed Alliance?

Ms. Maggio noted that this request was an increase of \$20 over the previous year; that the SWA did water testing in the West River valley swimming areas and reported on bacteria counts.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 19: Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of VABVI-VT Assoc. for the Blind?

Ms. Maggio noted the request was the same as last year's.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 20: Shall the voters appropriate \$821.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Valley Cares, Inc?

Ms. Maggio explained the Townshend residential organization.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 21: Shall the voters appropriate \$80.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Vt Center for Independent Living?

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 22: Shall the voters appropriate \$250.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Vermont Family Network?

Ms. Maggio noted that the program supported people in the community.

Public comment

Mr. Towler asked what services the organization offered.

Recess

The meeting was recessed briefly to research the information.

Resume discussion of Article 22

Ms. Maggio read from the VFN mission statement in their appropriation request, "to support all Vermont children and families, especially those with disabilities or special health needs," and that the organization had existed since 2008, supported largely by state and federal grants, serving over 1,400 families in Williston, Newport, and Rutland, and over 10,000 children in programs and workshops.

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Review and discuss Article 23: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Visiting Nurse Alliance?

Public comment

Mr. Towler asked about the correct name of the organization, and suggested they were supported by insurance. Ms. Maggio read from their request, that town appropriations allowed “affordable options for home health care in the Brookline community,” and helped to pay the organization’s taxes.

Review and discuss Article 24: Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Windham County Humane Society?

Ms. Maggio noted, as Animal Control Officer, that WCHS had been directly supportive in dealing with many strays and caring for animals.

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 25: Shall the voters appropriate \$650.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Women’s Freedom Center?

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 26: Shall the voters appropriate \$255.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Youth Services?

Public comment

(none)

Ms. Maggio noted that the requests discussed so far totaled \$9,366.00. Articles 27 and 28 would concern new requests.

Review and discuss Article 27: Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to be raised by taxes in support of The Gathering Place?

Ms. Maggio read from the request that TGP was a 501(c)3 nonprofit serving elders and adults with disabilities in the Windham County region and border communities since 1989.

Public comment

Mr. Towler asked whether local residents were accessing the service. Ms. Maggio noted that such information could not be disclosed, but that the services were available to local residents.

Review and discuss Article 28: Shall the Town vote to collect its current taxes by its Town Treasurer pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4791?

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 29: Shall the voters approve the appropriation of up to \$22,000 for recycling costs for fiscal year 2023?

Ms. Maggio noted that this was a reduction of \$5,000 in the upcoming budget, and thanked Mr. Towler for research on the recycling containers, and Mr. Noga for research on surrounding towns; that the recycling service was found to be relatively cost-effective and efficient; and expressed the hope that residents would keep the containers clean.

Public comment

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Mr. Schoener expressed appreciation of the recycling facility; and asked how much this contributed to the budget. Ms. Maggio explained that this was an appropriation to be added to the budget; that recycling was more valuable this year; the trucking fees were higher; but that the request was \$5,000 less than the previous year; and that the actual cost was listed in provided documents.

Review and discuss Article 30: Shall the voters approve the appropriation of \$20,000 to establish a Budget Stabilization/Rainy Day fund?

Ms. Maggio noted that this was best practice for communities to maintain approximately 20% of the budget for emergencies; that this appropriation was 5.3% of the budget; that it could be used as a restricted fund, a first for the town; that in July a disaster had been declared, and working with FEMA, some repairs had been delayed that might otherwise have been covered by such an emergency fund.

Public comment

(none)

Review and discuss Article 31: Shall the Town apply the budget surplus from the 2020-2021 budget in the amount of \$2,153 in the following manner? \$2,153 Capital Improvement Reserve

Ms. Maggio noted that the town of Brookline was responsible for the shed, Town Hall, Round Schoolhouse, the daycare building, and BMH; that the reserve would be getting a small surplus; that last year over \$33,000 had been returned to the taxpayers to reduce the tax rate; that this year's small surplus would go into the reserve if approved by the voters; otherwise would reduce the tax burden on the community.

Public comment

Mr. Ballou asked about the difference between the Budget Stabilization fund, and Capital reserve. Ms. Maggio explained that the Capital Improvement fund was used for lighting at the Town Office, for example; whereas the Budget Stabilization fund would not be used except for emergencies.

Entertain motion to adjourn hearing.

Mr. Noga moved to Adjourn. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, March 2, 2022