

## SPECIAL TOWN MEETING Budget Revote     May 27, 2023 MINUTES

Moderator John Hill called the floor meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Moderator reviewed the rules of the meeting and proceeded to consideration of the warned articles as follows:

Article 1: Linda Peltier moved that the Town vote to approve the expenditure of \$433,690 for the General Fund budget of which \$287,303 shall be raised by taxes. The motion was seconded by Jan Ladd.

The maker of the motion spoke about the budget and the need for improvement. She discussed the Selectboard expenses and stated that this Selectboard budget is appropriate for the Town and addressed the previous budget that was voted down. The seconder of the motion declined to speak. Jerod Glover spoke on the Transfer Station budget and Zoning budget. He discussed that there should be an increase in maintenance, and that the budgeted amount should go up next year. Brad Barrett spoke of the day-to-day office expenses, stating that, as the budget has stayed the same for five years, it is probably under budget and will need improvement in the future. Guy Charlton discussed the payroll expenses, stating that the Selectboard discusses pay raises every other year, and that there is a pay raise this year. He stated that there is a need for an extra man on the highway crew for highway ditching. There is an increase in FICA because of increased wages. Jon Dodd asked why the budget numbers didn't change. Linda Peltier answered that there are line item changes that do not affect the bottom line. Jim Laffler asked about the increase in the Volunteer Fire Department budget. Dave Bartholomew answered that half the budget is for equipment, and that new fire engines cost over \$500,000.

It was moved to close the discussion. The Article passed by voice vote.

Article 2: Thomas Bartholomew moved that the Town vote to approve the expenditure of \$799,270 for the layout, repair, and maintenance of Town highways of which \$538,944 shall be raised by taxes. The motion was seconded by Nancy Elkington. The maker of the motion Thomas Bartholomew spoke about keeping the budget the same, considering that there was a petition to keep it the same. He discussed his handouts showing the changes to the gravel and hauling line items and where we are already over budget. He also discussed an error in the Town report: a plow line was added in this budget and \$12,000 for the previous year should have been for loader tires. Thomas Bartholomew also stated that there are three items requiring addressing. The equipment reserve fund increased from \$20,000 to \$50,000 to offset the \$54,000 spent last year on equipment. Thomas Bartholomew spoke about the need for new equipment and referred to the ages of the Town's equipment provided in his handout. In the gravel line, the previous Board doubled the gravel line, but had no increases for hauling. Thomas Bartholomew spoke about the gravel line decreasing from \$150,000 to \$110,000, and increasing the hauling line by \$40,000 to offset the current prices to haul. Thomas Bartholomew stated that the Town is only maintaining roads, that the Town should be building roads, and that there should also be a line item in the budget for building roads. Mark Johnston asked where the budget surplus comes from and how it would impact residents' taxes. Thomas Bartholomew answered that the surplus gets carried over from the previous years' budget if so voted. Lois Trenn spoke of property assessment changes. Sam Bartholomew stated he thought the increase in taxes is about a penny increase in the tax rate for every \$10,000 budget increase. Lisa Chalidze asked about the Fire Department equipment loan line item and whether the Town would need to buy new equipment. Thomas Bartholomew answered that the savings account for new equipment is only

\$150,000. Norman Brown asked why the money from selling the grader couldn't go into the equipment reserve fund. Tom Bartholomew said this is the decision of the Selectboard. Bob Ambrozaitis asked about line-item changes; Thomas Bartholomew answered the vote is not on line items, and that spending can be moved around. Rob Ambrozaitis remarked on the previous gravel/hauling budget lines. Thomas Bartholomew said that he would have better gravel data next year. John Hill asked the assembly if Jaime Longtin could speak, and by voice vote the voters said no. Guy Charlton explained that they purchased gravel at the end of June in the previous fiscal year, but paid for hauling this year. Julia Austin asked if Jaime Longtin was a taxpayer. Mark Johnston made a motion to let Jaime Longtin speak. Julia Austin seconded it. Motion carried. Jaime Longtin stated that when there was a budget surplus, the Selectboard scrambled to spend it. There was discussion about carryovers and grants. Ronald Stewart called the question, and Jon Dodd seconded. By voice vote, the motion passed.

Jon Dodd moved to divide the assembly for Article Two. By a show of hands, the vote was in the affirmative.

Article 3: Jayme Purdy moved that the Town adopt its General Fund budget and Town Highway budget articles by Australian ballot pursuant 17§V.S.A, seconded by Ronald Stewart. Jayme Purdy said it is challenging to get time off to go to meetings. People would have more voice and more people could vote on the budgets if we moved to Australian ballot. Ron Stewart concurred. Tracy Howard suggested changing the time of the meeting, not the ballots. Mark Johnston didn't believe that it is fair to have a small population making amendments. Lisa Chalidze stated that hearing the Townspeople and the Selectboard speak is a unique and valuable opportunity. Lisa Fontaine suggested having a survey of the townspeople, so there wouldn't be only a small number of people making this decision. Jaci Lussier stated that with the proposed change, we would be losing our Vermont heritage. Robert Bizek called the question; Ronald Stewart seconded it. The vote to end the debate was in the affirmative. Article Three was defeated by floor vote.

Article 4: Discussion

Sam Bartholomew made a non-binding motion to have the Selectboard investigate an alternate time for the Town Meeting, seconded by Jean McKeever. The motion was carried by voice vote.

There was a question raised as to why this meeting was held on a holiday weekend. Linda Peltier stated that, in order to have the full Selectboard in attendance, this was the only weekend available.

Jaime Purdy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Lisa Hall. By unanimous consensus the meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

Town garage and ARPA Funding were not discussed under this article.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved

Disapproved

Heidi Chandler  
Town Clerk

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May 27, 2023