

2018 Brookline Town Meeting Minutes

March 6, 2018

At 9:00 A.M. On a bright and seasonably cool late winter morning, Moderator David Y. Parker, Jr. calls the meeting to order. Moderator Parker alludes to the fact that 9 A.M. is the earliest he can recall a town meeting starting. (Note: At a selectboard meeting on Nov. 1, 2017, there was a unanimous vote to start the annual town meeting at 9 A.M. with the hope of more participation, and voters who could only take a half day off from their job would have the opportunity to participate in all matters before having to leave for work.) Moderator Parker reads the preamble to the meeting.

Article 1. To Elect a Moderator

Marsha Omand nominates David Y. Parker, Jr. No other nominations. David Y. Parker, Jr. elected Moderator.

Moderator Parker announces it would be appropriate to entertain a motion to suspend the rules of the town meeting so that Vermont State Representatives Carolyn Partridge and Matt Trieber may speak. A motion is made by Gary Lavorgna and seconded by Guy Tanza to suspend the rules of Town Meeting. All in favor. Motion passed.

TOWN MEETING SUSPENDED

Representative Partridge opens the conversation by pointing out there is a newsletter located on the information table in the back of the meeting room with all their contact information and what they have been working on during the last session. Both Representatives Carolyn and Matt make short presentations on what is going on in Montpelier and expressed their goals for this legislative session. They both address their concerns in regard to Federal funding in Vermont. Matt who serves on the State Appropriation Committee discusses budget issues, while Carolyn, who serves as chairwomen of the House Agriculture & Forest Products Committee, addresses her concerns on a number of agriculture issues. Matt also mentions that they have left an unclaimed property report on the back table which lists some of Brookline residents who are owed money by the State Treasurer's office. These funds are the result of folks who may have made overpayments or have refunds, etc. and they are required by state statute to be deposited in the State Treasurer's office for claiming. They hold a short question and answer period. Paul Martocci asks "are taxes going down?" Both Carolyn and Matt reply that there is ongoing tax reform talks in the Ways & Means Committee. It is an evolving situation with many thoughts of how to raise money for education funding, other than using property values. Richard Omand questions the way land use taxes are determined. His feeling is land use tax should be applied to residents and not to out-of-towners. Carolyn explains the land use tax program and how it benefits state residents holding down uncontrolled development and maintains large segments of land for recreational as well as agriculture and forestry use. Lyndall Boal thanks the representatives for their hard work and common sense approach to matters, such as gun control legislation. Bruce Mello expresses the fact that most people do not understand the education tax system and there is a disconnect between Montpelier and the people. His suggestion is for those who are really concerned they should attend meetings both at Leland & Gray and NewBrook schools to understand and make known their desires and thoughts. Margaret Carusona asks what effects the new Federal tax laws will have on Vermont taxes. Matt does his best to explain a difficult situation which is being addressed by the Ways & Means Committee. He explains there is a total bipartisan support to reach decisions regarding the Federal tax reform issue. Archie Clark takes this time to thank the representatives and the Appropriations Committee in Montpelier for the almost half million dollars in grants that our town has received in the past three years for highway projects. In conclusion, both Representatives Carolyn Partridge and Matt Trieber thank the audience for their time and depart for other speaking engagements.

Moderator Parker then goes over some housekeeping rules and asks that everyone sign the attendance sheet that is being circulated around the room. He mentions the fact that there is a sign-up sheet for Julie Lavorgna's ListServ e-mails as well as a few surveys for our town residents and reminds everyone again about the West River Valley Union School District Members At Large Vote that is now going on at the Town Office.

TOWN MEETING RESUMED

Article 2. To elect a Town Clerk.

Sherry Greene nominates Guy Tanza. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called. All in favor. Guy Tanza elected Town Clerk

Article 3. To elect a Town Treasurer.

Bruce Mello nominates Somara Zwick. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called. All in favor. Somara Zwick is elected Town Treasurer.

Article 4. To elect a Collector of Delinquent Taxes.

Sherry Greene nominates Guy Tanza. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called. All in favor. Guy Tanza elected Collector of Delinquent Taxes.

Article 5. To elect all other officers required by law

There are two Selectboard seats available

Selectboard – 3 year term

Currently held by Gwendolyn Tanza. Sherry Greene nominates Gwen Tanza. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor.

Gwendolyn Tanza elected to a three year term

Selectboard – One year term currently held by Chris Webb who was appointed to a one year term.

Bruce Mello nominates Chris Webb. There are no further nominations.

A floor vote is called. All in favor

Chris Webb elected to a one year term.

Listers

A three year term currently held by Donald Gokey. Marsha Omand nominates Donald Gokey. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor.

Donald Gokey elected to a three year term.

Auditors

Three year term currently held by Heidi Nystrom. Guy Tanza nominates Heidi Nystrom. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor.

Heidi Nystrom elected to a three year term

Cemetery Commissioners

A five year term currently held by Dorothy Maggio. Chris Webb nominates Dorothy Maggio. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor.

Dorothy Maggio elected to a five year term

First Constable & Second Constable

In the past the selectboard has been responsible for these positions and it was asked that the audience show support for this decision. A motion is made by Guy Tanza and seconded to have the Selectboard maintain the responsibility of the Constable positions. A floor vote is called for. All in favor.

The constables' positions will remain the responsibility of the selectboard.

Trustee of Public Funds

Sherry Greene nominates Guy Tanza. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor. Guy Tanza elected.

Town Agent

Sherry Greene nominates Guy Tanza. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor. Guy Tanza elected as Town Agent.

Town Grand Juror

Guy Tanza nominates David Y. Parker, Jr. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor. David Y. Parker, Jr. elected as Town Grand Juror.

Article 6. Shall the Town accept the Auditor's Report?

Archie Clark makes a motion to accept the Auditor's Report and seconded by Gary Lavorgna. No discussion.

A Floor vote to accept the Auditors Report is called for. All in favor.

Auditor's Report accepted.

Article 7. 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 the General Fund:	\$143,005
Amount to be raised by taxes for Highway Fund:	\$158,512
Total Municipal Taxes to be raised:	\$301,517

Gary Lavorgna moves the motion and it is seconded by Samantha Bovat.

Discussion: Sally Fegley mentions that since moving here 30 years ago the town has gone from one of the lowest taxed towns to one of the highest taxed towns and is not sure if this is all because of state taxes or has the town been spending more money recently and is concerned about the future. Somara Zwick, Town Treasurer, points out that town spending (municipal taxes) has been lower this year than last. She also states that there are reasons for a slight raise in taxes in past years. For instance, town employees have not had substantial raises in more than seven years, the town had legal fees due to a four year property tax assessment issue requiring Vermont Supreme Court appearances and United States Supreme Court requests. Guy Tanza, Town Clerk, adds that a small town cost more to run than a larger town. We have a smaller population to spread cost around. We still require a Town Clerk, Treasurer, Listers, Selectboard, etc. requiring compensation. For years our town has been below state levels and just recently gave raises close to state levels for a town of our size. We are one of a very few towns that have minimal benefits to its employees. Gary Lavorgna also mentions that our town is extremely careful in spending as he watches Selectboard meetings and reads minutes associated with those meetings. Selectboard member Dot Maggio states the town in the past has had excessive legal bills in a tax assessment issue and feels we are over that problem and furthermore the town has budgeted funds to help offset budget deficits in the future. Discussion is closed and a vote is called for.

All in favor, Article 7 approved.

Article 8. To see what dates the town will vote to collect taxes?

Moderator Parker reminds folks that the current dates are August 15th, November 15th, February 15th, and May 15th. Margaret Carusona make a motion to keep current dates for tax collection and it is seconded by Sherry Greene. Discussion: Margaret Carusona speaks to the fact that four payments seems to work for most folks. No further discussion. A vote is called for.

All in favor to keep current dates for the collection of town taxes.

Article 9. Shall the town voters appropriate \$6, 206.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of the following organizations?

<u>Organization</u>	<u>FY 2018 Approved</u>	<u>FY 2019 Requested</u>
American Red Cross.....	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00
CRT-The Current Ct River Transit.....	250.00	125.00
Grace Cottage Foundation.....	300.00.....	300.00
Green-Up Vermont	50.00.....	50.00
Groundworks Collaborative (Formerly Brattleboro Drop In Center & Morningside Shelter)	300.00.....	300.00
Historical Society of Windham County.....	250.00.....	250.00
Leland & Gray Education Foundation.....	250.00.....	250.00
Moore Free Library.....	225.00.....	250.00
Project Feed the Thousands (For Townshend Food Bank).....	100.00.....	100.00
Senior Solutions.....	500.00.....	500.00
SEVCA.....	465.00.....	465.00
VABVI-VT Assoc. for the Blind	100.00.....	100.00
Valley Cares, Inc.....	821.00.....	821.00
Vermont Center for Independent Living.....	80.00.....	80.00
Visiting Nurse Alliance.....	1,000.00.....	1,000.00
West River Watershed Alliance.....	110.00.....	110.00
Windham County Humane Society.....	500.00.....	500.00
Women's Freedom Center.....	500.00.....	500.00
Youth Services.....	<u>255.00.....</u>	<u>255.00</u>
Total All Appropriations Requests to Be Voted.....	\$6,306.00.....	\$6,206.00

The motion is moved and seconded by Gary Lavorgna. Discussion: Lyndall Boal request the amount for the Grace Cottage Foundation be raised to \$500 and thinks the \$300 is less than it should be. Dot Maggio explains that the procedure for appropriations has a cutoff date and Grace Cottage did not meet that deadline with an adjustment to the \$300 figure they originally requested. There is further debate. Lyndall offers an amendment to increase the Grace Cottage appropriation to \$500 and it is seconded. There is a discussion. A number of folks are concerned about our tax dollars and how they are being spent and a number of folks offer their opinions on how the Foundation may receive gifts by concerned residents as an option. A vote is called for the amendment to raise the appropriation to Grace Cottage Foundation to \$500 and it is defeated.

Back to the original Article 9. A discussion is requested and hearing none Moderator Parker asked for a vote. Article 9 is approved in the amount of \$6,206.00.

Article 10. Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to be raised by taxes in support of Gerda's Equine Rescue?

Dot Maggio moves the motion and it is seconded by Sherry Greene. A discussion is called for. Samantha Bovat ask the expected question as to why this is listed as a separate article. It is explained by Dot Maggio of the Selectboard, that when the town receives a new appropriation request that is not on the list in prior years the town offers the voters the chance to approve it separately. Dot goes on to explain that when the town has an issue with small pets, the town can handle those complaints. But the town also has to deal with larger animal complaints such as horses, of which they have received in the past year. Gerda's Equine Rescue has been extremely supportive of the town's needs for this type of service and saved the town quite a bit of money in legal fees. So when this appropriation request was received the Selectboard felt it was in the town's best interest to add this article for voter approval. A number of views are offered in support of this request. Discussion is closed and a vote is called for.

All in favor. Article 10 is approved.

Article 11. Shall the voters of the Town of Brookline vote to collect its current taxes by its Town Treasurer pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4791?

The motion is moved by Sherry Greene and seconded by Gary Lavorgna

No discussion. All in Favor Article 11 passed

Article 12. Shall the town apply the budget surplus from the 2016-2017 budget in the amount of \$5,456 in the following manner?

\$2,000 Audit Reserve

\$2,500 Tax Abatement Reserve

\$956 Capital Improvement Reserve

Moved by Gary Lavorgna and seconded by Guy Tanza

Discussion: Selectboard Chair Dot Maggio and Town Treasurer Somara Zwick discuss the advantages and estimated cost of a town audit. Their thinking is to spread the approximate cost of an audit over a period of time rather than a large cost in one year. Somara goes on to say that our town auditors do a good job but it would be in the town's best interest to have a full time firm do a total audit. In regard to the tax abatement reserve, Dot addresses the fact the town has had a tax abatement for the Cutts family (who suffered a horrific loss of life and property during a house fire this past December) and the town will have to make up that loss of tax revenue this next budget season. As for the capital improvement reserve, the amount of \$956 could be used for a number of things i.e. a generator or window air conditioner. Archie Clark makes a comment thinking that the audit fund is important enough to have all the surplus put in that reserve. Treasurer Zwick makes note of the importance of having funds available in the manner the article reads. Discussion is closed and a vote is called for.

The ayes have it and Article 12 is approved as read.

Article 13. Shall the town vote to change Town Meeting Day to the Saturday preceding the first Tuesday in March, pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2640(b) ?

The motion is moved and seconded by Guy Tanza

Discussion: A number of reasons and scenarios are brought to the floor including possibly an evening meeting. Bruce Mello speaks to the fact that this was an idea thought of in hopes of getting more participation at town meeting. Discussion is closed. A vote is called for. The vote seems to be very close, both for the approval and opposition of Article 13. Moderator Parker decides to "divide the house" by having those in favor of approval stand on one side of the room and those apposed of article 13 stand on the other side of the room. After the counting it has been determined that the voters have not approved article 13 and it is defeated.

Article 14. To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Moderator Parker reminds the voters that these are non-binding issues.

The issue of changing town meeting day is discussed at length. Both time and day are considered. Gary Lavorgna thanks the Selectboard, Treasurer, Town Clerk, Delinquent Tax Collector, Archie Clark and Mark Bills for their combined efforts in running our town and keeping our highways safe. Selectboard member Dave Jones thanks Gary & Julie Lavorgna for their community work. Sherry Greene reiterates the need to fill school board vacancies. Dot Maggio speaks of the need to fix up our town cemeteries and the fact the town has set aside some monies to achieve that goal. Bruce Mello and Somara Zwick review the Brookline Meetinghouse fund balance and future goals for the development of this project. At this point Moderator Parker ask for a motion to adjourn this portion of the town meeting and start the School District meeting. A motion is made by Dot Maggio and seconded by Sherry Greene to adjourn the town meeting. A vote is taken. All in favor.

The town meeting is adjourned at 11:05 A.M.

2018 School District Meeting is called to order by Moderator David Parker, Jr.

Moderator Parker reads the preamble to the meeting.

Article I: To elect a moderator for a one year term.

David Parker, Jr. is nominated by Guy Tanza. There are no further nominations. A floor vote is called for. All in favor.

David Parker, Jr. elected as Moderator for a one year term.

Moderator Parker announces it would be appropriate to entertain a motion to suspend the rules of the Brookline School District Meeting to allow NewBrook School principal Scotty Tabachnick to address the audience. A motion is made by Gary Lavorgna and seconded by Sherry Greene. A vote is called for. All in favor.

BROOKLINE SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SUSPENDED

Principal Tabachnick is invited to speak. He thanks the town for the support shown this past year and shares some good news of what has been going on at NewBrook Elementary School. He speaks of a new curriculum being implemented and the fact the school has received a grant for 911 compliance with a new phone system installed. Principal Tabachnick goes on to explain how pleased he is with the student farm to school program and how the students are learning about local products, local economy and how they affect everyone. At this point he thanks the energy committee for all their hard work in bringing solar energy to the school. The 4 acre solar array behind the school will soon be up and running saving the community money and the fact we will be using less fossil fuels is a plus. He mentions that while the school kitchen was never intended/equipped to serve the number of students they now serve, after some modifications and a new chef, they have been able to accomplish the raising number of students requiring this nutrition. While school safety has been on the front pages of our newspapers recently, Mr. Tabachnick speaks of the fact that WCSU School Superintendent Bill Anton and longtime friend Robert Evans, a long time state police officer and now working for the Agency of Education (AOE), have been reviewing school safety prior to the latest news stories. As for staff, he alludes to the fact that long time and well respected School Librarian Cynthia Nau will be retiring after this year and a search for her replacement has been started. At this point he stops for a moment to reflect and personally thank Ms. Nau for her ongoing commitment and hard work through the many years of service to our community. The audience gives her a well-deserved round of applause. (Note: Ms. Nau is not present, as she is working on the election going on at this time in the town office.) In closing Mr. Tabachnick feels the school is in good shape but there is always the need for improvement. He thanks the audience for their time and has a brief question and answer period.

BROOKLINE SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING RESUMES

Article II: To elect all Brookline School District Officers as required by law for the ensuing year. Brookline School District Director 3 year term (ending 2021)

Currently held by Sherry Greene who is not running again.

Sara Webb is nominated by Chris Webb. No further nominations. A vote is called for. All in favor.
Sara Webb elected.

Brookline School District Treasurer 1 year term (ending 2019)

Currently held by Samantha Bovat.

Samantha Bovat nominated by Guy Tanza. No further nominations. A vote is called for. All in favor.
Samantha Bovat elected.

Leland & Gray School District Director 3 year term (ending 2021)

Currently held by Lyndall Boal who is not running again.

Shelby Brimmer nominated. No further nominations. A vote is called for. All in favor.
Shelby Brimmer elected.

Article III: To compensate the Directors and Treasurer of the Brookline School District \$200 each.

Moved by Dot Maggio. Seconded by Gary Lavorgna. Discussion called for. Hearing none a vote is called for.
All in favor. Article III approved.

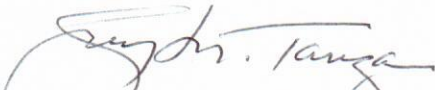
Article IV: To authorize the School Directors to accept any donations of land, gifts, or monies for school use.

Moved by Gary Lavorgna. Seconded by Sherry Greene. Discussion called for. Hearing none a vote is called for.
All in favor. Article IV approved.

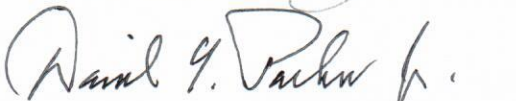
Article V: To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Sherry Greene reminds voters of the voting going on at the town office for at large members to the West River Valley Modified School District. Sherry also mentions the fact the new “super” school board is currently working on a visionary statement and reiterates a statement made by Bruce Mello earlier to get involved. Samantha Bovat offers information on where one should look for meeting schedules. Moderator Parker thanks Sherry Greene for all she has done as a member of the school board. Bruce Mello takes this opportunity to remind everyone of the hard work done for the Solar Array at NewBrook School and the ramifications of finally being finished. There being no further business to discuss, Moderator Parker asks for a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Somara Zwick. Meeting adjourned 12:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Guy M. Tanza – Town Clerk



David Y. Parker, Jr.- Town Moderator