

Approved Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 6:30 PM
(videoconference)

Present

Selectboard:

David Jones (Chair)
Gwen Tanza
Shelby Brimmer
Joseph Dutton
Bruce Mello

Town Officers:

Guy Tanza (Town Clerk, videographer)
David Parker (Moderator)

Members of the Public:

Dorothy Maggio
Dan Towler
Peter Barus (Recorder)
FACTV (Videoconference recording)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM.

Additions/deletions/changes to the agenda (none)

Remote Meeting Rules of Procedure

Mr. Jones explained the rules of procedure for the meeting; attendees will remain muted until recognized by the Moderator. The Moderator will read each Article; a selectboard member may provide further information. Attendees may ask to be recognized using the “raise hand” function on their respective devices. Rules of procedure limit comments to two minutes. Attendees will be recognized during the Public Comment section following each Article. The “chat” function should not be used other than to reach the Chair if there is a malfunction or Point of Order.

It was noted that this was not a Town Meeting, and there was no opportunity to change the Articles on the ballot.

Mr. Jones introduced Mr. Parker, who would serve as Moderator. Mr. Parker explained that the meeting would follow the Agenda as listed on the sample ballot and the Warning, as duly posted for the public.

Review and discuss Article I: 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;
- Selectboard Member for a term of 1 year;
- 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;
- Town Grand Juror for a term of 1 year;

Public comment

Mr. Parker opened the floor for comments.

Mr. Towler was recognized, and asked for clarification, noting that Ms. Maggio was on the ballot, and was not currently a selectboard member; and that Mr. Dutton would be stepping down. Mr. Jones noted that Ms. Tanza had been nominated for a three year term, and Ms. Brimmer for one. Mr. Towler asked about the vacancies for Lister. It was noted that all seats were vacant as of Town Meeting Day, and that the selectboard could appoint new Listers should none be elected. Mr. Tanza had obtained assistance in determining what to do in such an event.

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

Public comment

The public will have opportunity to read the report and vote on Monday.

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: | \$ 131,417 |
| • Amount to be raised by taxes for Highway Fund: | \$ 157,679 |
| • Amount of Fiscal Year 2020 General Fund Surplus: | \$ (33,671) |
| • Total Municipal Taxes to be raised: | \$ 255,425 |

Mr. Jones explained that the general funds reflects increase of about 6300 for salary increases for hourly employees to keep up with statewide standards, although at the low end of statewide averages; the highway fund number is level-funded; the surplus is as of June 30, 2020, when the town was about 16,000 over what was anticipated and under expenses by about 17,500; and had run a surplus the previous year; the main reason for lower expenditures was from town employee compensation as the treasurer and assistant treasurer worked few hours, and there were no legal fees, usually budgeted at about 3,000; the result being that this years total is about 3,800 less than last year.

Review and discuss Article 4: Shall the Town authorize the collection of taxes in 4 instalments, with the due dates being: August 17, 2021; November 16, 2021; February 15, 2022; May 17, 2022.

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Public comment

Mr. Jones noted the same payment schedule as usual, to coincide with a Tuesday when the town office would normally be open.

It was noted by Mr. Parker that Articles 5 through 26 constitute the funding requests that normally come in.

Mr. Towler asked if the requests were typical, and whether the organizations had been vetted by the selectboard.

Mr. Jones noted that 5 through 23 are requests that come from organizations that historically have been awarded appropriations by the town for many years; and the amounts fluctuate by small amounts from year to year; and that the selectboard does not take responsibility for “vetting” the organizations; and articles 24 through 26 may be discussed, as not having been historic recipients.

Mr. Parker explained that the methodology for accepting such requests and placing them on the warning involves a process the recipients must go through, with requirements that must be met.

Mr. Towler asked if these were all organizations that benefit the town in some way. Mr. Parker reflected that discussions at board meetings do look at how the organization serves residents as a criterion for eligibility. But this is not technically to be considered “vetting”.

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

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

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

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

Public comment

Mr. Jones noted that he would no longer be the coordinator for Green-up Day.

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

Public comment

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

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

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 12: Shall the voters appropriate \$300.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Moore Free Library?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 13: Shall the voters appropriate \$650.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Senior Solutions?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 14: Shall the voters appropriate \$465.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of SEVCA?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 15: Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Southern Vermont Therapeutic Riding Center?

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Public comment

Review and discuss Article 16: Shall the voters appropriate \$110.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Southeastern Watershed Alliance?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 17: Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of VABVI-VT Assoc. for the Blind?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 18: Shall the voters appropriate \$821.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Valley Cares, Inc?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 19: Shall the voters appropriate \$80.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Vt Center for Independent Living?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 20: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Visiting Nurse Alliance?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 21: Shall the voters appropriate \$500.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Windham County Humane Society?

Review and discuss Article 22: Shall the voters appropriate \$650.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Women's Freedom Center?

Public comment

Review and discuss Article 23: Shall the voters appropriate \$255.00 to be raised by taxes in continuing support of Youth Services?

Public comment

The next three Articles had not historically been recipients of appropriations.

Review and discuss Article 24: Shall the voters appropriate \$100.00 to be raised by taxes in support of Rural Fire Protection Program?

Public comment

Mr. Jones explained that this was known as the Dry Hydrant Grant Program, and examined the appropriation request letter, finding few details about Brookline in particular; and noted that under normal circumstances a new appropriation (such as the So Vt Therapeutic Riding association) would elicit public comment before a floor vote; and that in this case no such procedure is possible under Australian ballot; and that this year the selectboard had made decisions to provide the requests as separate Articles so that voters could make the choice.

Mr. Tanza explained that the organization placed hydrants (such as at Serbo's) as part of the town's fire security.

Mr. Parker noted that residents' water sources can have hydrants installed through this organization.

Mr. Dutton was recognized and added that the selectboard had felt that separate Articles were the most democratic way to address the situation, and requests were put forward for organizations that had some local connection.

Review and discuss Article 25: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,590.00 to be raised by taxes in support of Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS)?

Public comment

Mr. Towler was recognized and asked about this new organization. Mr. Jones explained that it is part of Brattleboro Development Corporation, born after Tropical Storm Irene and the closure of Vermont Yankee, and works to support economic development in the area; and requested municipal funding from every town in the Windham region at the rate of \$3. per person based on population (530 residents of Brookline).

Review and discuss Article 26: Shall the voters appropriate \$250.00 to be raised by taxes in support of Vermont Family Network?

Public comment

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Mr. Jones read from the request letter about the services

Review and discuss Article 27: Shall the Town vote to collect its current taxes by its Town Treasurer pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4791?

Public comment

It was noted that this Article is typical of most Town Meeting Warnings.

Review and discuss Article 28: Shall the voters approve the appropriation of up to \$27,000 for recycling costs for fiscal year 2022?

Public comment

Mr. Jones explained how the amount was calculated, an increase of \$5,000 over the amount voted last year at Town Meeting for recycling costs; anticipating hauling costs will be increasing, and processing costs have generally increased, although they have gone down slightly in the past couple of months; there was lengthy discussion as a board, and a small amount was added anticipating that there will be a need to protect the site in a limited way, such as by monitoring to forestall illegal dumping or to pay for more consistent cleanup, which has hitherto fallen to the Town Clerk to address personally; and noted that projections of costs are quite uncertain into the future, as it has become cost-ineffective; and discussed impacts on taxes, and that taxes are based on assessed value of residents' properties. Mr. Tanza noted the possibility of rent being charged for the bins now used free of charge. Mr. Jones noted that there is no other hauler besides Triple-T, and the bins are on loan from the solid waste management district, without charge; and that when they deteriorate, supplier will have to purchase replacements and charge fees for their use.

Entertain motion to adjourn hearing.

No further comments or questions being heard, Mr. Parker recognized Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones moved to Adjourn. Second by Ms. Tanza. All in Favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, February 25, 2021