

BROOKLINE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2024

On a relatively mild Monday, March 4th evening, 2024, the Brookline Annual Town Meeting was called to order by moderator David Parker at 6 p.m. In attendance, 62 Brookline residents and 5 guests.

Moderator Parker reads the preamble to the meeting and refers to the Robert's Rules of Order book for guidance. He asks the audience for non-residents of Brookline to please stand up so they can be recognized and reminds them that though they cannot vote, they would be able to speak if the audience approves of that.

Article 1. To elect a town moderator for a term of one year.

The first order of business will be to elect a moderator. Mr. Parker opens the floor for nominations. Stan Noga nominates David Parker for moderator. Further nominations are requested. Hearing none, motion is voted. David Parker is unanimously elected moderator for the Town of Brookline. The audience applauds and thanks Mr. Parker for his 20 years as serving moderator for the Town of Brookline.

At this point, Mr. Parker makes a motion to suspend the meeting in order to allow Vermont State Treasurer Michael Pieciak and Vermont State Representatives Leslie Goldman and Michelle Bos-Lun to speak to the audience. Mr. Parker reminds the audience that Mr. Pieciak was instrumental in helping the town secure a loan for the badly needed town equipment. The motion is voted on and passed.

First to speak, Mr. Pieciak goes over the role of the Vermont State Treasurer and his qualifications and history of working for the state of Vermont. Being a local, born and raised in Brattleboro, Vermont, he stated it was his pleasure to be able to help the town secure the loan and explained how monies are appropriated in Montpelier. He mentions that the state treasurer's office has a list of monies owed to the residents of the state of Vermont, and Brookline had a number of residents that were on that list. He offered to meet with them after the meeting and be able to cut checks for them in order that they would receive their monies. Naturally, the issue of the Vermont education tax was raised and he said that he was aware of all the concerns of everyone and that agencies were working on it diligently to come to some sort of conclusion in regard to funding this all-important issue. At this point, he thanked everyone for allowing him to speak to them and stayed for the rest of the meeting.

Next up, Vermont State Representatives Leslie Goldman and Michelle Bos-Lun address the audience. They each explain their roles and the committees that they sit on in Montpelier. Michelle sits on the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and Leslie sits on the House Committee on Health Care. They also mention that they have newsletters and contact sheets in the back of the room for everyone to pick up on their way out. Someone mentions the fact that they haven't had the ability to meet with their state representatives like they used to be and ask the representatives what they can do about that. Ms. Bos-Lun mentions the fact that since the district reapportionment was done after the 2020 census that they meet in Bellows Falls and realizing that Bellows Falls is a little further from Brookline and Newfane they offer to meet with Brookline residents on a more regular basis. *(It is worth noting that Leslie and Michele will be meeting town residents at the Brookline Town Office on Saturday, March 23rd at 3 p.m. for a question-and-answer event)* After a quick question and answer period they thank the audience for allowing them to speak.

Mr. Parker calls the meeting back to order and the town resumes its business.

Article 2, to elect all other town officials required by law.

Town clerk for a term of one year.

Stan Noga nominates Guy Tanza. No other nominations received; Vote is called for. Guy Tanza elected Town Clerk for one year.

Select board member for a term of two years.

Michael DeSocio is nominated by Stan Noga. No other nominations received. A vote is called for Michael DeSocio elected select board member for a term of two years.

Select board member for a term of three years.

Joseph Dutton nominates Doug Wellman. No other nominations received. A vote is called for. Doug Wellman, elected select board member for a term of three years.

Select board member for a one-year term. It's the remainder of a three-year term. Bruce Mello nominates Stan Noga. No other nominations received. A vote is called for. Stan Noga is elected to a one-year term, finishing the remainder of a three-year term.

Lister for one year, a remainder of a three-year term. Guy Tanza nominates Alyssa Schmidt. No other nominations received. A vote is called for. Alyssa Schmidt elected Lister for a one-year term, finishing out a three-year term.

Lister for two years, finishing out a remainder of a three-year term. No nominations received. The position is vacant.

Lister for three-year term no nominations received. The position is vacant.

Auditor for a three-year term. Heidi Nystrom is nominated by Lisa Rucker. No other nominations received. A vote is called for. Heidi Nystrom elected Auditor for a three-year term.

Auditor for a three-year term. Frank Rucker is nominated by Dot Maggio. No other nominations received. A vote is called for. Frank Rucker elected for auditor for a term of three years.

Cemetery Commissioner for a term of five years. Doug Wellman, nominated by Paul Madalinski. No other nominations received. A vote is called for. Doug Wellman, elected Cemetery Commissioner for five year term.

Article 3, shall the voters accept the auditor's report? Marie Tattersall calls the question. No discussion. A vote is called for. The Auditor's Report is accepted.

Article 4, shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$201,299, of which \$146,834 shall be raised by taxes and \$54,465 by non-tax revenues. Dot Maggio calls the question, Stan Noga seconds it, a discussion is called for. Doug Wellman offers an amendment to Article 4 with a 10% reduction of the \$201,299. A number of residents expressed their thoughts. The amendment is called and a vote is taken. The amendment fails. A vote is taken on the original figures of Article 4, a vote is called for, and passed.

Article 5. Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of \$327,418, of which \$271,318 shall be raised by taxes and \$56,100 by non-tax revenues. Guy Tanza calls the question. A discussion is called for. Select board members Stan Noga, Bruce Mello, and Dot Maggio explain some of the expenses and how they arrived at them. Gary Lavorgna, after thanking E. Mark Bills our town Highway Supervisor for all his dedicated and hard work calls the question. A vote is called for. Article 5 passes.

Article 6. Shall the voters authorize the collection of taxes in four installments, with the due dates being August 13, 2024, November 12, 2024, February 11, 2025, and May 13, 2025? Stan Noga moves the question, no discussion, Marie Tattersall seconds it, a vote is called for, and Article 6 is passed.

Article 7, shall the voters appropriate \$9,746 to be raised by taxes in support of the following organizations.

Organization	FY 24 approved	FY 25 requested
American Red Cross	250.00	250.00
Grace Cottage Foundation	500.00	500.00
Green up, Vermont	50.00	50.00
Groundwork's collaborative	300.00	300.00
Historical Society of Windham County	250.00	250.00
L&G Educational Foundation	250.00	250.00
Moore free library	1100.00	1100.00
Newbrook PTO	500.00	500.00
Newfane, Anew	1000.00	---
Rural Fire Protection Program	100.00	100.00
Senior Solutions	700.00	710.00
SEVCA	465.00	465.00
Seveds	500.00	1590.00 500
The current- CRT/ Moover	---	125.00
The Gathering Place	500.00	500.00
VABVI	100.00	100.00
Valley Cares Incorporated	821.00	821.00
Vermont Family Network	250.00	250.00
Visiting Nurse Alliance	1000.00	1000.00
Vermont Center for Independent Living	80.00	80.00
Windham County Humane Society	500.00	500.00
Winston Prouty Center	300.00	300.00
Youth Services	255.00	255.00
Total all appropriation requests to be voted	\$9771.00	\$9746.00 \$8906.00

Guy Tanza calls the question.

Discussion: . Guy Tanza offers an amendment to the. Article. He feels that the current request of \$1,590 from Seveds is excessive. And he would like to have it reduced to \$500. A representative of Seveds comments explaining impacts it may have on Brookline. After speaking, the amended article is called and put to a vote **Shall the voters appropriate \$8906.00 to be raised by taxes in support of the following organizations. The amended article 7 is passed.**

Article 8, Shall the voters vote to have the current taxes collected by its town treasurer. Dot Maggio calls the question and it is seconded by Somara Zwick. No discussion, a vote is called for. Article 8 is passed.

Article 9. Shall the voters approve the expenditure of up to \$19,000 for recycling costs for fiscal year 2025? Gary Lavorgna calls the question and it seconded by Guy Tanza. Discussion: a number of voters offer their concerns, alternatives and thoughts of our towns recycling efforts. Discussion is closed and a vote is taken. Article 9 is passed.

Article 10, shall the voters appropriate \$4,000 to be placed in a dedicated account for the purpose of a future professional audit. Dot Maggio moves the question and it is seconded by Guy Tanza. No discussion, a vote is taken and article 10 is passed.

Article 11, Shall the voters approve contributing \$10,000 from ARPA funds to the Newbrook Fire Department purchase of a new fire truck?

Stan Noga calls the question and it is seconded by Gary Lavorgna. Discussion: Gary Lavorgna asks to address the audience. He mentions the Newbrook Fire Dept taking over the Williamsville fire dept. He goes on to explain the aging of equipment and the cost to replace it. He mentions the fact that equipment has been refurbished and it is not cost-effective refurbishing it again. Bruce Mello suggests the monies come out of the Highway Fund, but offers no article amendment A vote is called for and article 11 is passed.

Article 12, Other business, discussion which shall not be used for taking binding municipal action and the moderator shall so rule.

Stanley Noga, Jr. asked for input from citizens as to citizens feelings regarding using real estate taxes for improving and upgrading the meetinghouse building. He stated that back when the town discussed taking ownership of the two properties for \$1.00 each, citizens expressed a desire to not pay for improvements and upgrades via real estate taxes. He stated that on last year's meetinghouse building survey a question on said survey asked if citizens wished to make improvements to the property. Said question did not distinguish between grants, donations, or tax dollars in paying for building improvements. He is looking for current citizen input as to how citizens feel the town should pay for said improvements.

Mr. Noga Jr. pointed out that Brookline has yet to receive FEMA reimbursement for the 2021 year flood costs. Secondly education tax rates are yet to be set but are anticipated to significantly increase due to Brookline's three year property sales report statistics. Brookline will be penalized for excess CLA and COD statistics. Based on the current number of Vermont municipalities who need to do reappraisals, it may be years before a penalty which increases tax rate does not need to be applied to the Brookline tax rate.

Earlier this evening it was stated that it may cost \$200,000 to \$300,000 to bring the meetinghouse to a condition that can legally accommodate the public. That translates to approximately a \$60,000 per year commitment over 5 years. When that amount is added to other expenses to be paid by taxation, Stan is trying to get a feel as to how citizens feel about paying for those expenses.

No other comments were offered by meeting attendees.

At this point Margaret Carusona makes a motion to adjourn the meeting and it is seconded by Julie Lavorgna. A vote is taken and the motion to adjourn is passed at 8:20 PM.

3Respectfully Submitted,

Guy M. Tanza, Town Clerk

Dot Maggio, Selectboard Chair

David Y. Parker Jr. Meeting Moderator