March 3, 2025 - Town Meeting Minutes

On Monday evening, March 3rd, 2025, the Brookline Annual Town Meeting was called to order by moderator David Parker at 6 p.m. In attendance, 53 Brookline residents and 2 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 1 year.

The first order of business will be to elect a moderator. Mr. Parker opens the floor for nominations. Guy Tanza 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.

Mr. Parker raises the issue of how much time participants should be allowed to speak. Robert's Rules of Order allows 10 minutes; Mr. Parker describes the benefits of limiting speech to 5 minutes. Sally Fegley motions to limit speech to 5 minutes; Guy Tanza seconds the motion and the motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Parker informs the audience that three (confirm #) of the listed articles will require amendments: Articles 4, 9, and 11.

ARTICLE 2. To elect all other Town Officers required by law:

A. Town Clerk for a term of 1 year.
Dorothy Maggio nominates Marjorie Ray. No other nominations are received. Marjorie Ray is elected Town Clerk for a 1-year term.

B. Selectboard Member for a term of 3 years.
No nominations are received. The position is vacant, but could be filled in the future.

C. Selectboard Member for a term of 2 years.
Julia Duke nominates Emily Beer. No other nominations are received. A vote is called for. Emily Beer is elected as a select board member for a term of 2 years.

D. Lister for a term of 3 years.
No nominations are received. The position is vacant.

E. Lister for 1 year (remainder of a 3-year term).
Julie Lavorgna nominates Alyssa Schmidt. No other nominations are received. Alyssa Schmidt is elected Lister for a 1-year term.

F. Lister for 2 years (remainder of a 3-year term).
No nominations are received. The position is vacant.

G. Cemetery Commissioner for a term of 5 years.
Danny Lazzarini nominates Dorothy Maggio who agrees to serve. No other nominations are received. Dorothy Maggio is elected Cemetery Commissioner for a 5-year term.

ARTICLE 3. Shall the voters accept the Auditors Report?

Stan Noga makes a motion to accept the Auditors Report. Seconded by Bruce Mello. No discussion. A vote is called and the Auditors Report is accepted.

ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of $225,524.00 of which $175,727.00 shall be raised by taxes and $49,797.00 by non-tax revenues?

Stan Noga makes a motion to Suspend the Rules of the Meeting in order to consider Article 11 prior to consideration of Article 4. The motion is seconded by Stuart Duke. The motion is not debatable. The Moderator calls for a vote and the motion to consider Article 11 before Article 4 is adopted.

ARTICLE 11. Shall the town establish a dedicated reserve fund to be called the Building Expense Fund, which can be used for capital improvements, maintenance and repairs of all town buildings (specifically the Daycare School building, the Brookline Meetinghouse, the Round Schoolhouse, the Town Hall and the Town Highway structures) by placing the non-tax revenue received from the lease of the former Brookline school as the funding source?

The Moderator explains that Suzy's Little Peanuts Daycare, the renter of the former Brookline School and the funding basis for Article 11, has decided not to renew their lease on the building for the upcoming year. Thus, there will be no rent revenue to fund Article 11. As such, Mike DeSocio makes a motion to Lay Article 11 on the Table. The motion is seconded by Guy Tanza. The motion is not debatable. The Moderator calls for a vote and the motion to Lay Article 11 on the Table is adopted.

Dorothy Maggio moves the question and it is seconded by Doug Wellman. Mike DeSocio offers an amendment to article 4 and provides an explanation. The new numbers are "operating expenses of $238,524.00, of which $208,727.00 shall be raised by taxes and $29,797.00 by non-tax revenues." Discussion ensues. The vote to "Amend Article 4 with the new figures" passes.

Article 4 now reads:
Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of $238,524.00 of which $208,727.00 shall be raised by taxes and $29,797.00 by non-tax revenues?

Further Discussion: Dan Towler requests Recycling as a separate line item as a possible amendment. After discussion, no amendment is added. Article 4 is voted on and adopted with the new numbers as now reads above.

ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of $364,300.00 of which $312,100.00 shall be raised by taxes and $52,200.00 by non-tax revenues?

Dorothy Maggio moves the question and it is seconded by Bruce Mello. Gary Lavorgna expresses gratitude for the highway work done. The vote is called and the motion is adopted.

ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters authorize the collection of taxes in 4 installments with the due dates being: August 12, 2025, November 11, 2025, February 10, 2026 and May 12, 2026?

Gary Lavorgna moves the question and it is seconded by Dorothy Maggio. No discussion, a vote is called and Article 6 is passed.

ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters vote to have the current taxes collected by its Town Treasurer?

Gary Lavorgna moves the question and it is seconded by Margie Wellman. No discussion, a vote is called and Article 7 is passed.

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters appropriate $2,500.00 to be placed in a dedicated account for the purpose of removing hazardous trees in the Austin Cemetery?

Dorothy Maggio moves the question and it is seconded by Gary Lavorgna. Paul Dutton suggests allowing trees to fall naturally. The vote is called. The ayes have it and article 8 is passed.

ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters authorize applying $46,500.00 surplus funds against the tax burden to reduce the rate of general fund expenditures as shown in Article 4?

Dorothy Maggio moves the question and it is seconded by Bruce Mello. Mike DeSocio motions for an amendment, which is seconded by Bruce Mello, and substitutes a new number

$43,511.00, which is the actual figure. The original number of $46,500.00 was only an estimate. The amendment for Article 9 is voted on and passed.

Article 9 now reads:
Shall the voters authorize applying $43,511.00 surplus funds against the tax burden to reduce the rate of general fund expenditures as shown in Article 4?

The amended Article 9 is voted on and approved.

ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters authorize applying $35,000.00 of highway funds raised by taxation for 2021 flood expenses for contracted services and flood materials (see page 13 of the 2023 town report) be applied to reduce the highway fund amount shown in Article 5?

Dorothy Maggio moves the question and Bruce Mello seconds it. Dorothy explains that this is related to FEMA funds and returning back ½ of a total reimbursement of $70,000 over two years.

Article 10 is voted on and approved.

ARTICLE 12. Shall the voters allow individuals who are residents of the State, but not residents of the town, to be elected or appointed to all town offices except the selectboard and justices of the peace as provided in 17 V.S.A. 264a(a)(1)?

Dorothy Maggio moves the question and Bruce Mello seconds it. Discussion follows. Sally Fegley asks for an amendment to add "only when Brookline residents are not available." The motion to amend is seconded by Paul Dutton. The amendment passes.

Article 12 now reads:
Shall the voters allow individuals who are residents of the State, but not residents of the town, to be elected or appointed to all town offices except the selectboard and justices of the peace as provided in 17 V.S.A. 264a(a)(1) should no Brookline residents be available.

The Amended Article 12 is voted on and approved.

ARTICLE 13. Shall the voters appropriate $11,896.00 to be raised by taxes in support of the following organizations:

Organization	FY24 Approved	FY25 Approved	FY26 REQUESTED
American Red Cross	$ 250.00	$ 250.00	$ 250.00
Grace Cottage Foundation	$ 500.00	$ 500.00	$ 500.00
Green Up Vermont	$ 50.00	$ 50.00	$ 50.00

Groundworks Collaborative	$ 300.00	$ 300.00	$ 300.00
Historical Society of Windham	$ 250.00	$ 250.00	$ 250.00
L&G Educational Foundation	$ 250.00	$0.00	$0.00
Moore Free Library	$ 1,100.00	$ 1,100.00	$ 1,100.00
Newbrook PTO	$ 500.00	$ 500.00	$ 500.00
Newfane Anew	$ 1,000.00	$0.00	$ 1,000.00
Rural Fire Protection Prg (VACD)	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 200.00
Senior Solutions	$ 700.00	$ 710.00	$ 710.00
SEVCA	$ 465.00	$ 465.00	$ 465.00
Seveds	$ 500.00	$ 500.00	$ 1,590.00
MOOVER	$0.00	$ 125.00	$ 175.00
The Gathering Place	$ 500.00	$ 500.00	$ 500.00
VABI (VT Assoc Blind)	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
Valley Cares Inc	$ 821.00	$ 821.00	$ 821.00
Vermont Family Network	$ 250.00	$ 250.00	$ 250.00
Visiting Nurse/Dartmouth	$ 1,000.00	$ 1,000.00	$ 1,000.00
VT Ctr Independent Living	$ 80.00	$ 80.00	$ 80.00
West River Valley Thrives		$0.00	$ 500.00
Windham Co Humane Society		$ 500.00	$ 500.00
Women's Freedom Center	$0.00	$0.00	$ 500.00
Winston Prouty	$ 300.00	$ 300.00	$ 300.00
Youth Services /Interaction	$ 255.00	$ 255.00	$ 255.00
TOTALS:	**$ 9,271.00**	**$ 8,656.00**	**$ 11,896.00**

Doug Wellman moves the question and it is seconded by Bruce Mello. Dorothy Maggio moves for an amendment to reduce the Total for FY26 Requested to $9,806.00. The amendment is seconded by Guy Tanza. Explanations for lower figure:
Modification #1 - Dartmouth Visiting Nurses no longer offering service to Brookline.
Modification #2 - Lower Seveds to $500.00

Discussion follows. Jack Spanierman, of Seveds, provides background on their programs.
Voting on the Amendment passes.
Voting on Article 13 for Total FY26 Requested of $9,806.00 passes.

ARTICLE 14. "Other Business" discussion which shall not be used for taking binding municipal action, and the Moderator shall so rule.

Mike DeSocio reads a Proclamation from the Governor's Office for Guy Tanza, retiring after 14 years serving as Town Clerk. Proclamations are also read for Dorothy Maggio and Stan Noga, retiring from the Selectboard. Much gratitude is expressed in standing ovations for Guy, Dorothy and Stan!

Dan Towler asks who is on the cover of the Town Booklet for 2024. Dorothy Maggio offers that it is a picture of Sonny Rink on the hay wagon. The 2024 Town Booklet is dedicated to Sonny.

Amy Blazej reads a statement regarding anti-apartheid, pro-Palestinian articles which other Vermont towns added to their town meetings this year.

Kerry Bourne offered that he has reviewed the renovation work to be done at the HIstoric Meetinghouse and feels that respect for historic restoration is needed. Bruce Mello said that everything done will be in consultation with the town and the Preservation Trust. No tax dollars have been spent on the historic buildings in town.

Gary Lavorgna motioned to adjourn. Margie Wellman seconded. A vote is taken and the motion is passed at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie Ray, Town Clerk

Michael DeSocio, Selectboard Chair

David Y. Parker, Meeting Moderator