

Town Meeting Minutes 2022

104 Registered Voters

Meeting called to order at 10:08am.

Clerk Cilley starts the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Art. 1. The floor is open for nominations of moderator.

John O'Brien nominates Israel Provoncha. Rob Howe seconds. Provoncha introduces himself. All aye. So moved.

Provoncha discusses procedural town meeting information.

Art. 2. The Collector of Delinquent Taxes Joe Paquin reports that there is a total of \$152,581.55 total delinquent tax. \$118,494.84 has been sent to tax sale. Paquin has a list of tax sale property if people are interested in it, they can email him. Betsy Race asks why there is no list of delinquent taxes listed in the book? Paquin responds that the list is always changing and it takes up a lot of space in the book. He has it available if you would like to request it. The Town Report is due right after taxes are due and many people are late by a day. There are about 25 parcels that are delinquent owned by about 17 different people.

The Auditors, Betsy Race and Linda Howe discuss their report. The General Fund and the Highway Fund are both raised by taxes. Other operational funds, the fund reserve and the special revenue and trust do not come taxes. Other operational funds such as the cemetery and recreation funds is the total that they have in their funds overtime. Race apologizes for the Town Report being late but states that it was late because she wanted to go to jail, it was on her bucket list.

Library- Mariah Lawrence and Theresa Fitzgerald discuss the proposed budget for the FY23. Lawrence states that she has the best job in the whole world. This past year her focus has been on the tradition of the library being the hub of the town. The after-school program has been very successful. 20% of the kids who attend school came to the program. Lawrence received a grant to purchase seven bikes and she has taught three kids to ride bikes. We have a new fence that Gordon Barnaby put up in honor of Sue Barnaby. The library is benefiting from the Ranger 5k on June 11th which will have a free concert. Lawrence loves the tradition of the town and has decided to wear her strawberry skirt for decades to come.

Lister- Helen O'Donnell, Daniel "Rudi" Ruddell, & Darlene Miller present their report. The last town-wide appraisal was twelve years ago. There has been an influx of sales. Not much of a rise in prices but a turnover. This year there was an increase in sale prices. Large jump in number of sales compared to last year. Not many valid sales, many were LLC's or between family members. A reappraisal is required if the number falls above 115% or below 85%. We are currently at 95%. Ruddell would not be surprised if we had to have another reappraisal. The domain of the town website has been renamed to tunbridgevt.org.

Cemetery Commissioner- No Report

Planning Commission Chair Laura Ginsburg and member Daniel “Rudi” Ruddell give report. The past year has been busy. Talking about trails has been much of what was discussed the past year. In late December the Planning Commission and the Trail Committee sent the Selectboard a recommendation regarding the trails. The Selectboard is doing their due diligence to understand the legal information. They are still working but now the role of the Planning Commission is to support the Selectboard.

The Selectboard adopted the Town Plan. It needs to be updated every eight years but can be modified at any time.

Nancy Chapman stepped down and Amy Frost has joined the Planning Commission. They are only meeting once a month now and are focusing on energy and solar opportunities and village improvements.

Recreation Committee was discussed by the chair, Kathy Galluzzo. There is a softball tournament today so there are many people there. This tournament is benefiting families in need because of a fire etc. They are not doing breakfast yet or swimming lessons. The cookshack =has been open often and anyone is welcome anytime it is open.

Selectboard secretary John O’Brien discusses the report. The Town Budget is two distinct budgets. There is the Highway and General Fund. We level fund our budget and if there are increases its reactionary only (war in Ukraine = rising gas cost) or raises.

There was a surplus in the general fund and highway last year. Any surplus in the highway we can roll into the highway fund for bridges, paving, equipment etc. The general fund surplus needs to be voted on to determine where it goes. The Selectboard has proposed that half of the surplus \$138,111.61 be split in two and do half to highway and half for a tax break on property taxes. This will be covered more in Article 11.

Tunbridge has also received just under \$400,000 through ARPA funds. A town wide discussion will be started on how to spend this money.

Upper Valley Community Nursing Project has suggested a Town Nurse. The Town Nurse would be someone who knows the community and who can help people with aging in place, tips on not falling etc.

Gary Mullen discusses the highway budget and the purchase of a new dump truck which takes about 1.5 years to get. It is around \$106,000 which we took from the equipment fund. Mud season was horrific and the road crew did really well and are looking good for the summer.

The treasurers report was discussed by the treasurer, Rebecca Hoyt, stating that an audit for FY 22 is starting.

Trustee of Public Funds Rob Howe discusses their report. The returns were shown at the bottom of the page. The latest report from two days ago show that the accounts have all dramatically decreased. The volatile market is the reason we only allow 4% use of the funds. May need to reduce that amount this year. Some accounts have special stipulations, but others don’t such as highway and special funds.

Environmentally safe investments were researched. The Crude Investment Statutes was referenced. They could not find information on other towns investments. Norwich is the only town that invests in CD's. Thetford had no specifics on ESG policies. Sylvie Desatual was pu tin touch with VSECU and they could not get us fossil free investments at this time. ESG investments gave us a 1% or more less returns. If we change our investment group we would have to pay fees to transfer.

Sylvie Desatual moves to accept the reports. Victoria Paquin seconds. Nancy Howe states there is a cemetery commissioner here. All aye. So moved.

Art. 3. Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, by delivery to town hall postmarked on or before that date, with delinquent taxes having an interest charge of 1% per month or fraction thereof for the first 3 months and 1 1/2 % each month pursuant 32 VSA Section 5136, to thereafter and an 8% penalty charged against them from the due date? Nany Howe moves to accept. Seconded. All aye. So moved.

Art. 4. Shall the voters authorize Town Treasurer, pursuant to 32 VSA Section 4791 to collect current taxes? Moved and seconded. All aye. So moved.

Art. 5. Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$631,772.25 of which \$375,557.25 shall be raised by taxes? Nancy Howe moves. Victoria Paquin seconds. Helen O'Donnell doesn't believe we need a town nurse. Motions to amend to lower it by \$13,000 to \$362,557.25. This is moved and seconded. Kathy Galluzzo asks what a nurse would do? John O'Brien states this person would help arrange appointments, in house visits, how not to fall. The ambulance service doesn't get to all houses etc. If we try for a year and it is great we will keep it, if not we don't keep it. Jola O'Donnell states Neighbors Helping Neighbors is available and during hard times we do not need to increase our budget. Ben Tucker states that CVCOA is the same thing. A question is asked regarding who would oversee hours and budgeting an who helps them. Darlene Miller states that CVCOA really helps. Betsy Race is part of the SASH program and CVCOA. SASH only helps in federal housing. The Upper Valley Community Nursing Program would be for anyone in rural areas. CVCOA is great if they have time and people. The town nurse you can call right away and has a medical degree. The town nurse can also help with nursing home information. She is in favor.

Mariah Lawrence is supportive. Sharon has a lot of need for this. She offered office hours in the library. \$13,000 feels like a small amount to get the help people need.

Kayla Thibault is on the community health team at Gifford and believes this would be a good program to try.

A question is raised if we will keep paying for CVCOA or if we will get rid of this one. John O'Brien states that we will keep all of these items to help.

Laura Ginsburg states that we are really focusing on elderly and not on small children and families. This town nurse would help all people and not just the elderly.

Marybeth Lang is a nurse case manager and people who come home from the hospital don't have knowledge on what they need to do. Anyone can call with a question and states it would be great to try this. Jen Hayslett is in favor of the concept but wonders who supervises them and how do they get paid? John O'Brien states that the Upper Valley Community Nursing Project supports nurses and helps with scheduling, paperwork and the Selectboard helps oversee it.

Jerilyn Zargooian thinks this is a perfect thing for a grant. Ginny West states this is a great idea to have a nurse, but there is a lot of unknown. Liability to the town and when do we get to talk to them.

The amendment on the floor is decreasing the budget from \$631,772.25 to \$618,772.25 of which \$362,557.25 will be raised by taxes. The nays have it. Amendment is cancelled.

Original article on the table. Victoria Paquin motions to amend to increase the budget by \$6000 to increase the salary of the treasurer. Nancy Howe seconds. Victoria Paquin states that the average treasurer wage in Vermont is \$33/hr and the increase would bring our treasurer up to \$28/hr. We are lucky to have her and should pay appropriately. She is invaluable to the auditors and recreation department. The new amendment increases the budget from \$631,772.25 to \$637,772.25. All aye. So moved.

\$381,557.25 to be raised by taxes. All aye. So moved.

Art. 6. Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of \$1,013,555.13 of which \$873,205 shall be raised by taxes? Moved by Victoria Paquin. Seconded by Rob Howe. Jola O'Donnell thanks the highway crew for all their hard work but would like to decrease by \$17,900.10 because the fuel price hasn't been budgeted in and thinks their salary increase is too high. Seconded by Helen O'Donnell. Nancy Howe thinks it is hard to find good help nowadays. Laura Ginsburg states that the FY21 budget to actual was quite a bit different. Would we anticipate the same type of discrepancy? Rebecca Hoyt states that with budgeting we take a three year estimate for overtime. That is why it is never exact. Sean Lester wants to know if we can take the money from surplus. Helen O'Donnell asks if it was raises for just the road crew or for all town employees? Gary Mullen states all the employees got a COLA increase and with the road crew we appreciate and value their hard work and want them to stick around and keep working for us. The state and other towns cannot keep their employees and we wan to.

The amendment on the table is to have \$855,215.03 shall be raised by taxes. The nays carry it.

Article 6 as stated. Ayes have it.

Art. 7. Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$45,500 to support the Tunbridge Volunteer Fire Department Inc.? Nancy Howe moves. Joe Paquin seconds. Simon Bradfords speaks that our free dispatching is ending and we will have to pay approximately \$13,000-\$14,000 for dispatching. All aye. So moved.

Art. 8. Shall the town appropriate \$18,438 to support the following social services, pursuant to 24 VSC Section 2691? Lenora Kimball discusses Safeline. 85% of the money given goes to services. \$750 is allotted. She would like us to add another \$250 to this. This is not a lot of

money and it benefits so many children and families. Amended to \$18,688 with an extra \$250 to Safeline. Seconded. Rebecca Hoyt states that Two Rivers Outtaquechee is an operating budget not an appropriation. This totals \$2112.00. Laura Ginsburg suggests we move \$2112 from TROQ to Safeline. Seconded. Helen O'Donnell adds that Neighbors Helping Neighbors for \$500 should be added.

Lenora Kimball withdraws her amendment. Gordon Barnaby gives Provoncha information on how to properly discuss and amend.

An allocation of \$2112 to Safeline will not change the bottom line of \$18,438.00. All aye. An amendment is made to add Neighbors Helping Neighbors appropriation for \$450 bringing the total to \$18,888.

John O'Brien gives information about policy to get an appropriation. The Orange County Special Investigation Unit for \$1500 asked for the money but never sent in a report. Neighbors Helping Neighbors did.

Michael O'Brien states that in November they did send in an appropriation. Amendment is to reduce OCSIU from \$1500 to \$1000 and transfer \$500 to Neighbors Helping Neighbors. All aye.

Jerilyn Zargooian asks if we are giving \$2112 and \$750. Yes. All aye. So moved.

Art. 9. To allow the Selectboard to appoint the offices of Treasurer and Town Clerk. Joe Paquin moves. Seconded by Gary Mullen. John O'Brien speaks to the article. There are pros and cons to electing versus appointing. The Selectboard is leaning towards appointing because these positions require prior experience, talent etc. For the health of our town we need to have people who can operate these positions. They will still maintain a triangle of checks and balances. Rob Howe asks if we will start that next year? The Selectboard states no, it would be today if passed. All aye. So moved.

Art. 10. To elect all town officers as required by law. Moved by Joe Paquin. Seconded by Kay Jorgensen. Joe Paquin moves to remove the Town clerk by 3 year and Town Agent for 1 year. Seconded by Kay Jorgensen. All aye.

Selectboard: Gary Mullen nominated by Victoria Paquin. Clerk Cilley seconds. All aye. Mullen nays.

Lister: Darlene Miller is nominated by Helen O'Donnell. Betsy Race seconds. All aye.

Auditor: Anissa Morrison is nominated by Betsy Race. Seconded. All aye.

Cemetery Commissioner: Baxter Doty is nominated by Rob Howe. Nancy Howe seconds. All aye.

Trustee of Public Funds: Rob Howe is nominated by Joe Paquin. Nancy Howe seconds. All aye.

Library Trustee: Lynne Hadley is nominated by Anna Dechart. Seconded. All aye.

Library Trustee: Laura Ketchum is nominated by Joe Paquin .Seconded. All aye.

Collector of Delinquent Taxes: Joe Paquin is nominated by Betsy Race. Seconded by Rob Howe. All aye.

First Constable: No nominations

Second Constable: No nominations

Town Grand Juror: Laura Kimball is nominated by John O'Brien. Seconded. All aye.

All aye. So moved.

Art. 11. To approve the surplus funds to be moved to the Capitol Fund for the Town Garage and to reduce taxes. Moved by Victoria Paquin. Seconded. How much is surplus? General Fund is \$138,111.51. Highway would be given \$69,055.81 and the same amount would be moved to reduce taxes. All aye. So moved.

Art. 12. To see if the Town will vote to give the Tunbridge Volunteer Fire Department a 100% or some other amount property tax exemption for a 5-year period. Moved and seconded. Betsy Race asks why its listed as "another amount". Ruddell states its statutory language but we have always done 100%. All aye. So moved.

Art. 13. To see if the Town will vote to give the Tunbridge Grange a 100% or some other amount property tax exemption for a 5-year period. Moved. Seconded by Nancy Howe. All aye. So moved.

Art. 14. Other Business

Todd Tyson states on June 11th, 2022 there will be a lot of community events. Bicycles for the Ranger. A 5k walk/run, a bike clinic, a concert. Free and open to all in Tunbridge and the surrounding three towns. Beer and food!

Rob Howe states there will be the 150th Celebration of the Fair June 17th, 2022 in the Pavillion with food at 6pm and a band to relive the Dreamland Dance Hall.

Kathy Galluzzo- The school board will start at 1pm.

Theresa Fitzgerald- Discusses the Memorial Day happenings.

Mariah Lawrence- The raffle drawing will be at the end of the meeting.

John O'Brien- Discusses the session report as the State Representative.

Meeting is adjourned at 12:19pm.