

TOWN OF TUNBRIDGE

2023 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 10:00am

Meeting called to order at 10:03am.

1133 register voters. 141 voters present.

Moderator Israel Provoncha leads the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator Provoncha gives background on himself.

Art. 1 To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.

Clerk Cilley opens the floor up for nominations for Moderator. Rob Howe nominates Israel Provoncha. Peg Sherlock seconds. No discussion. So moved.

Provoncha discusses Roberts Rules and the way the meeting will run.

Art. 2 To hear the reports of Town Officers, Collector of Delinquent Taxes, Auditors, Library, Listers, Cemetery Commission, Planning Commission, Recreation, Selectboard, Treasurer, and Trustees of Public Funds.

Joe Paquin discusses his Delinquent Tax Report. \$139,333.22 total in delinquent tax and \$122,374.84 is going to tax sale. Paquin discusses options for help if you are delinquent in taxes. Auditors Anissa Morrison and Linda Hoyt discuss their report on page 27. They included a Town Budget History on the next page to see the budget overview from the past five years. Auditors meet once a month. Morrison asks the crowd if there is anything specific that they want to see in the Town Report to make it look better for the townspeople. The Auditors will be reviewing the recent audit that was just completed and will look over the recommendations from the auditors. Mariah Lawrence discusses the Library Report. This is her third year wearing her town meeting strawberry skirt. Lawrence loves to create library programs that will help fill gaps that the town is missing. They have created a Strategic Planning Committee to help continue growing the library and programs in the direction that the town is looking for. Listers Helen O'Donnell, Darlene Miller and Daniel "Rudi" Ruddell discuss their report on page 31. The CLA for the Town is now at 91.38% and the COD is at 16.98%. The State Statues mandate a townwide reappraisal if the CLA goes below 85% or above 115% so we are not mandated to do a townwide reappraisal. If the COD exceeds 20% we will also be mandated to do a townwide reappraisal. Ruddell notes that O'Donnell is not running again for lister. She has been a town servant for over 30 years. Standing ovation for O'Donnell. Cemetery Commissioners report can be found on page 49. No member of the Cemetery Commissioners was present. Planning Commission Report is discussed by co-chair Laura Ginsburg. Legal Trails issue began in 2021 and in 2022 the Planning Commission was able to discuss other issues that impact Tunbridge. There is a lot of state and federal money that is available to the town to help offset the cost of these projects. The Planning Commission received approval from the Selectboard to apply for grants. One of the grants is for a sidewalk scoping grant for the village center. This also reduced the speed limit in the village from 35mph to 30mph. Another grant that was applied for was the

BRIC grant which is money from the state and federal emergency monies. There are four spots that are considered critical in building up that are large enough for emergency vehicles and to get through and make sure they are accessible during the case of an emergency. Town Trail discussions continue. The Planning Commission has paused their effort due to the lawsuit from John Echeverria and Carin Pratt. The lawsuit had its day in court and the judge issued her ruling which was essentially allowing the town to dismiss the case due to ripeness. Echeverria and Pratt have filed a second lawsuit specifically involving the Orchard Trail. Ted Hoyt asks if the trails that are owned by Echeverria are thrown up, how many other trails will be affected. Ginsburg states that Echeverria owns two trails and Tunbridge has four, but whatever happens here will set precedent for all the trails in the state of Vermont. Johnathan Bicknell, chair of the Trails Committee discusses trails further. Sylvie Desautels asks if this bill John has will go through this year. John states that probably not this year. Kathy Galluzzo discusses the Recreation Committee report. Galluzzo states that they are back doing the breakfasts once a month, partnering with community for baseball (signups are happening right now). John O'Brien discusses Selectboard Report on page 7. O'Brien discusses ARPA funds. Tunbridge received a little less than \$400,000 to spend how we decide. There will be an accounting swap so that we have more flexibility on how we spend that money. Sarah Wraight from TRORC has helped a lot with this. We were allowed to use our ARPA funds to hire a grants manager (Maryann Caron) who oversees our ARPA grants and is helping us find many other grants. The town has hired a Town Nurse last year (Jodi Hoyt) which has been going great. "Tunbridge cares about Tunbridge". General Fund Budget begins on page 9. O'Brien gives a brief overview of the budget. Gary Mullen discusses the Highway Budget on page 15. Mullen states how our road crew does a wonderful job (applause). One of the things that the SB is trying to do to support the Town Crew is putting money aside for an addition to the town garage down the road. Trying to stay ahead of trucks breaking down and purchasing new trucks. The town garage is 50 years old now and is undersized for the size of the equipment that we have now. Rebecca Hoyt discusses the treasurer report on page 19. Sullivan Powers just finished our audit for FY 22. Came back with only 2 real problems. The report is still in a draft but Hoyt has the draft report with her. People who wanted to pay taxes with credit cards: we are in the midst of changing our credit card company and that we will have a new company for tax season. Liz York- Trustees of Public Funds: page 37 report touches upon a large gift that will affect next year for the Village Cemetery Fund. As of February things are looking up again for the funds. Motion to accept the offers report moved by Rob Howe. Seconded by Nancy Howe. No discussion. All aye. So moved.

Art. 3 Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on Wednesday, November 1, 2023, by delivery to town offices 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 ½ % each month pursuant 32 V.S.A. § 5136, to thereafter and an 8% penalty charged against them from the due date?

Nancy Howe moved. Seconded by Peggy Sherlock. No discussion. All aye. So moved.

Art. 4 Shall the voters authorize Town Treasurer, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4791 to collect current taxes?

Peggy Sherlock so moved. Nancy Howe seconded. No discussion. All aye. So moved.

Art. 5 Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$741,554.96 of which \$450,239.96 shall be raised by taxes.

Nancy Howe moved. Peggy Sherlock seconded. Helen O'Donnell noted that the appropriations are down because the Two Rivers are more of a due than an appropriation and the operating dues line item has increased. Is that where the Two Rivers has gone? Treasurer Hoyt states that yes, we pay Two Rivers, Treasurers association, Listers association, etc. O'Donnell then asks about the First Branch Ambulance and South Royalton Rescue budget had increased and where that came from. Mullen states that they are both contracted services that gave us a budget. Anissa Morrison asks what the benefit to the town will be for the increased budget in Assistant Town Clerk as well as the Assistant Treasurer. Clerk Cilley states that having an increase in the budget for the assistant keeps us open longer without an appointment and Hoyt states that increased budget for Jola will keep the Friday office hours open longer and help keep Hoyt caught up. Laura Ginsburg asks about the budget for the Orange County Sheriff and since we are budgeted for \$10,000 and we have only spent \$4000 do we think it will increase? All aye. So moved.

Art. 6 Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of \$1,114,593.75 of which \$ 969,243.75 shall be raised by taxes.

Peggy Sherlock moves. Joe Paquin seconds. No discussion. All aye. So moved.

Art. 7 Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$58,800 to support the Tunbridge Volunteer Fire Department Inc.?

George White moves. Seconded by Mike Morrison. All aye. So moved.

Art. 8 Shall the Town appropriate \$15,645 to support the following social services, pursuant to 24 V.S.C. ~ 2691.

Peggy Sherlock moves. Nancy Howe seconds. Anissa Morrison proposes an amendment to reduce the total appropriation by \$250. Nancy Howe seconds. The total appropriation is reduced to \$15,395. All aye. So moved.

Art. 9 Shall the town establish a reserve fund to be called the ARPA Fund to be used for funding ARPA selected projects in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804?

Moved by Nancy Howe. Seconded by Peg Sherlock. Kay Jorgensen asks how many people know what ARPA means. O'Brien states that ARPA is the American Rescue Plan Act. O'Brien gives a brief overview of ARPA. All aye. So moved.

Art. 10 Shall the voters allow any surplus funds from this current fiscal year (FY23) to be moved into the ARPA Fund?

Nancy Howe moves. Rebecca Hoyt seconds. All aye. So moved.

Art. 11 To elect all Town Officers as required by law.

Selectboard: Joe Paquin nominates Mike McPhetres.

Lister: Helen O'Donnell nominates Israel Provoncha. Provoncha declines. Ruddell describes what being a Lister position is. No nominations.

Auditors: Anissa Morrison nominates Linda Hoyt.

Cemetery Commission: Baxter Doty nominates Dennis Cilley.

Trustee of Public Funds: Rob Howe nominates Matt Frost.

Anna Dechert makes a motion to add another trustee. Mariah Lawrence seconds. All aye so moved. Anna Dechert nominates Michael Krathamer for three year term. Library Trustee 3 year term. Anna Dechert nominates Cheryl Metcalf.

Collector of Delinquent Taxes: Victoria Paquin nominates Joseph Paquin.

First Constable: No nominations.

Second Constable: No nominations.

Town Agent position has been eliminated by legislator. Judy Howe was nominated for "Secret" Town agent.

Town Grand Juror: No nominations.

Art. 12 Shall the voters authorize the Town to create a Highway Building Capital Improvement Fund?

Moved by Joe Paquin. Seconded by Nancy Howe. All aye. So moved.

Art. 13 Shall the voters approve the surplus funds from last fiscal year (FY22) to be divided equally between reducing taxes and the Highway Building Capital Improvement Fund?

Peggy Sherlock moved. Nancy Howe seconds. Total surplus is \$139,344.48. \$69,672.24 to each fund. All aye. So moved.

Art. 14 Other Business

Kay Jorgensen: Chili Cookoff on Saturday. Friday March 31st will be the Winter Evening talk on bears. Fred Pond: Questions about the Transfer station hours. Expanded hours during the pandemic. Wednesdays and Saturday hours will be set for the foreseeable future. John O'Brien gives an overview of what is going on in the State Legislature. Randy Chapman asks O'Brien to talk about the Affordable Heating Act. Betsy Gaiser asks if there is a bill to reorganize the County Sheriff's Department. Joe Paquin states that there is something in the works. Mariah Lawrence states that lunch is ready and there are still tickets available for purchase.

Nancy Howe makes a motion to adjourn. Peggy Sherlock seconds. All aye. So moved. Meeting closed at 11:57am.