

**POMFRET**  
**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**March 7, 2017**

Moderator Kevin Geiger called the meeting to order at 9:03am. He asked for the assembly's consent for the meeting to be digitally recorded. Prosper Valley School student Cooper Jones was asked to serve as the microphone runner for the meeting.

1. Kevin Geiger was elected Moderator for a one-year term.

At this time Kevin read the names of the deaths and births in town from 2016, and asked for a moment of silence in memory of those who had passed on.

2. Rebecca (Becky) Fielder was elected Town Clerk for a one-year term.

3. Anne Bower moved to accept the reports as submitted, seconded by Bill Emmons. The motion to accept the reports as submitted passed by unanimous voice vote.

4. The following officers were elected:

Selectboard	3 year term	Emily Grube	73 votes
		Doug Tuthill	21 votes
Selectboard	1 year term	Michael Reese	59 votes
		Neil Lamson	40 votes
Selectboard	1 year term	Sheila Hopkins	Unopposed
Selectboard	1 year term (to finish a 3 year term)	Scott Woodward	55 votes
		John Peters Jr.	48 votes
Treasurer	1 year term	Ellen DesMeules	Unopposed
Tax Collector	1 year term	Ellen DesMeules	Unopposed
Cemetery Commissioner	3 year term	Diana Tuthill	Unopposed
Lister	3 year term	Neil Lamson	Unopposed
Lister	1 year term	Norm Buchanan	Unopposed
Auditor	3 year term	1 nomination – declined	Vacant
Auditor	2 year term	Regina Lawrence	Unopposed
Grand Juror	1 year term	Michael Reese	Unopposed
Town Agent	1 year term	John Putnam	Unopposed
Library Trustee	3 year term	Betsy Rhodes	Unopposed
Library Trustee	3 year term	Jennifer Gubbins	Unopposed
Trustee of Public Funds	3 year term	Marjorie Wakefield	Unopposed

In the midst of the voting on Article 4, Town Meeting was briefly recessed at 9:59am in order to call to order the School Meeting, which had been mistakenly warned for 10:00am. After it was voted to recess the School Meeting until 1:00pm, the Moderator re-called Town Meeting to order at 10:05am.

5. Anne Bower moved that the Town appropriate the sum of \$39,828 for the Abbott Memorial Library. Joanna Long seconded the motion, which then passed by unanimous voice vote.

At this time, our Windsor 4-1 Representative Susan Buckholz spoke to the assembly of some of the items of interest currently before the legislature, and expressed her desire to have more conversations with local voters to find out what is important for our community.

6. Bruce Tuthill moved that the Town appropriate the sum of \$9,500 for the Cemetery Commission, seconded by Bill Emmons. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

7. Jody Eaton moved and Margaret Kannenstine seconded the motion for the Town to appropriate the sum of \$12,979 to support the following social services: \$3,200 to the Woodstock Area Council on Aging to run The Thompson Center; \$2,500 to the Ottauquechee Community Partnership (OCP) to support the Mentor and Buddy Program; \$400 to WISE (Women's Information Service), Inc.; \$3,950 to the Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH; \$750 to the Spectrum Teen Center; \$300 to the Woodstock Area Job

Bank; \$979 to Health Care & Rehabilitation Services (HCRS); and \$900 to Pentangle Arts. Deanna Jones, Bill Emmons, Sherman Kent, Anne Bower, Betsy Rhodes, and Laura Kent all spoke out in supporting the work of these various agencies. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

8. Terri Chamberlin moved, seconded by Frank Perron, that the Town appropriate the sum of \$50,800 to the Pomfret-Teago Volunteer Fire Department for operational expenses for the 2017-18 fiscal year. Melanie Williams then moved to amend the warned amount to \$40,000, seconded by Michael Reese. Doug Tuthill noted that the firefighters put in a lot of hours without compensation, and must have the proper equipment and certification which is expensive, and stated that he rejects the amendment. Nicole Fosse expressed that having a competent Fire Department in town is a critical necessity and she supports the full funding amount. Melanie Williams explained that the Selectboard had felt it prudent to reduce the amount the Fire Department had presented because the reserves were funded and the equipment that had been budgeted for in the past has been upgraded, and that it was not necessary to keep spending so high. She mentioned the John Wood report that was commissioned by the Selectboard which showed that Pomfret is spending twice as much as other towns of similar size. If the Town and Fire Department were to move to a contract for services, the savings to the Fire Department in insurance costs (private vs. VLCT) would nearly make up the difference in funding. Marge Wakefield pointed out that fundraising had been used extensively in the past to help with costs, but that it can't be counted on reliably for covering operational expenses. Terri Chamberlin (Assistant Chief) pointed out that \$50,000 is the bare minimum of their expenses, and that insurance is essential to their operations. She expressed that the Department is willing to work on a contract for services, and that they would also be willing to return any unspent funds resulting from the contract and reduced insurance costs back to the town. Many citizens spoke up in support of fully funding the Fire Department at the \$50,800 level, as the services they provide are incredibly important for the town, and as volunteers they shouldn't have to spend even more time away from their families by running fundraisers. Anne Bower called the question and the debate was closed. The assembly voted in opposition of the amendment. After some more discussion about the original article, with voiced support for full funding from several townspeople and volunteer firefighters, the motion to appropriate \$50,800 passed by voice vote.

9. Greg Tuthill moved and Terri Chamberlin seconded that the Town appropriate \$6,000 for the Pomfret FAST Squad. Eric Chase asked if there was a line by line budget for the expenses, and Frank Perron (FAST Squad President) pointed out that it was listed as an appropriation with no breakdown. He then detailed the projected expenses: \$2000 for liability insurance, \$1000 for workers comp, \$1000 for equipment and supplies, and \$2000 for ongoing training. Melanie Williams pointed out that the FAST Squad is also working with the Selectboard to develop a service contract. Following this discussion, the motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

10-12. Michael Reese moved to lay Articles 10-12 on the table until after the discussion and vote on Articles 13-16, as their outcome may influence 10-12. Norm Buchanan seconded the motion, and it passed by voice vote.

13. Melanie Williams moved and Bill Emmons seconded that the voters establish a Highway Rainy Day Reserve Fund to cover unanticipated revenue shortfalls and to pay non-recurring and unanticipated highway fund expenses in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804(a). Several people asked how the fund would operate, what would qualify as an unanticipated expense, and whether spent funds would be reported on clearly in the annual report. Frank Perron (SB) explained that it would cover such things as underfunding from delinquent taxes, a Hurricane Irene-like event, or even a bad winter; and that all spent funds would be detailed in the town report. It was explained that the fund was merely a place to put the surplus from previous years so that it could be spent, and could be utilized to even out the highs and lows in the budget from year to year. The motion then passed by voice vote.

14. Michael Reese moved and Bill Emmons seconded the motion to deposit a combined amount of \$375,000 from the highway fund balance into the Highway Paving Reserve Fund (\$100,000), the Bridge Reserve Fund (\$75,000), and the Highway Rainy Day Reserve Fund (\$200,000) in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804(a). Marge Wakefield asked the Selectboard to explain why there is such a large surplus, and Frank Perron and Melanie Williams explained that it was an accumulation of unspent funds from several years that resulted from operating the highway department with less than a full crew (underspent on wages & insurance), as well as lower costs due to recent mild winters. Sheila Murray asked why the surplus couldn't be applied to offset next year's taxes. Michael Reese replied that it could be, but that it is recommended and prudent to hold onto it to cover revenue shortfalls and expenditures. After some more related discussion, the motion passed by voice vote.

At 12:35pm, Bill Emmons moved and Norm Buchanan seconded that the Town Meeting be recessed until after the conclusion of the School Meeting. At 2:21pm, the Moderator called the meeting back to order.

15. Anne Bower moved that the voters establish a Town Rainy Day Reserve Fund to cover unanticipated revenue shortfalls and to pay non-recurring and unanticipated Town fund expenses in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804(a). Betsy Siebeck seconded the motion. Neil Lamson asked if the surplus money

deposited into the fund would be used to pay bills in July of 2017, the start of the new fiscal year, before tax money comes in in August. Michael Reese replied that it could be, and it will free up funds for possible spending in the current fiscal year. Frank Perron clarified that the Rainy Day Fund would not be used to pay expected daily expenses, but may be used entirely to cover revenue shortfalls before June 30, 2017, such as delinquent taxes. Other questions included whether the money taken out would be replaced (not without a vote of the town), will the funds spent be detailed in the Town Report (yes), and whether there were limitations on how the money could be spent (some, but it can be broad). The motion passed by voice vote.

16. Bill Emmons moved and Norm Buchanan seconded the motion to deposit a combined amount of \$150,000 from the Town fund balance into the Town Rainy Day Reserve Fund (\$100,000) and into the Town Building Reserve Fund (\$50,000) in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804(a). Frank Perron then made a motion, seconded by Emily Grube, to amend the amount to \$157,940.93 to reflect the actual surplus balance AND to deposit the entire amount into the Town Rainy Day Reserve Fund, with \$0 going to the Building Reserve Fund. Kevin Geiger ruled the amendment out of order, as it comprised too vast a change in the original article. Betsy Rhodes asked that the Moderator be overruled to allow discussion of the amendment as stated, and the assembly voted in favor of overruling. Frank Perron explained that they were proposing removing the designated \$50,000 from the Building Reserve Fund in order to cover the expected delinquent tax deficit, which is currently over \$300,000. The acceptance of the amendment and subsequently the article as amended passed by voice vote.

Following the passing of Articles 13-16, Bob Merrill moved and Bill Emmons seconded that we pick up Articles 10-12 off the table for discussion and vote.

10. Bill Emmons moved and Anne Bower seconded that the Town approve the combined budget of \$1,250,071 for town (\$343,571) and highway (\$906,500) expenses shown in the Town Report (not including voted appropriations from Articles 5-9). Laura Kent (Auditor) offered a handout of the current budget status through February 28, 2017 for informational purposes. The motion passed by voice vote.

11. Frank Perron moved the article to see what the Town will raise in taxes (the sum of \$963,053 as estimated in the Comparative Statement may be altered by actions taken on previous articles), and Bob Merrill seconded. Anne Bower then moved and Frank Perron seconded the motion to amend the article to include the amended voted appropriation from Article 8 for a total of \$973,853. The question was called by Regina Lawrence, and the amendment passed. The voters then passed the amended article by voice vote.

12. Frank Perron moved and Anne Bower seconded that the voters require that taxes be paid in U.S. funds in two installments (the first by 2:30pm August 18, 2017 and the balance by 2:30pm on February 9, 2018), with interest on overdue taxes to be charged at 1% per month, and all delinquent taxes will be subject to an 8% penalty after February 10, 2018 in accordance with Vermont Statutes. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

17. Other proper and necessary business:

Bill Emmons expressed thanks to the road crew, Town Clerk, Treasurer, and the 5-member Selectboard for a job well done this year. He also "thanked" the Cloudland Road Bud Lite Can Thrower for giving their road a pop of color.

Norwood Long thanked Melanie Williams for stepping in and serving on the inaugural 5-member Selectboard.

Sherman Kent thanked the Auditors for their hard work on the Town Report.

Bob Merrill updated everyone about the ECFiber network that has been partially built out in town, and noted that the Bunker Hill Road and Bartlett Brook Road builds were currently in progress as part of the 2016 buildout. The remainder of the town is scheduled as part of the 2017 build later this year.

Joanna Long thanked Becky Fielder for answering even silly questions cheerfully.

Loie Havill thanked Bob Merrill for recording the meeting and keeping everyone awake with the microphone sound effects.

Melanie Williams thanked Jonathan Williams (Selectboard Assistant) for his hard work and dedication this year. Laura Kent added that Jonathan is a huge asset to the board, as the time he puts into projects allows members of the Selectboard to be working people as well as board members.

Becky Fielder reminded everyone that dog licenses are due on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Jack Crowl put in a plug for Green-Up Day on May 6<sup>th</sup>, and noted that Gaal Crowl is ready for people to contact her for road clean-up assignments.

Seth Westbrook noted that School Board meetings are the first Monday of each month at the Prosper Valley School library, and that they are open to the public if anyone wants to attend.

Deanna Jones gave some information about the Prosper Valley Trust, whose fundraising efforts provide enrichment to the students in our school outside of the regular school budget.

John Leavitt thanked the Fire Department and FAST Squad for their dedication to the townspeople.

Bill Emmons moved to adjourn, Bob Merrill seconded, and the Moderator declared the meeting closed at 3:36pm. The new officers were sworn to their duties by Becky Fielder.

Lunch was served by the Thompson Senior Center to benefit their Meals on Wheels program.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rebecca Fielder, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

Date:

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