

POMFRET
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING – DRAFT MINUTES
June 16, 2015

Moderator Kevin Geiger called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. He asked permission of the assembly to record the meeting digitally. The recording will be available on the town website within 5 days of the meeting.

Article 1: Election of Town Officers:

- Selectboard member, 3 year term ending at Town Meeting 2018

Bill Emmons nominated Eric Chase, who has been serving as an appointed Selectboard member since April. Being that there were no other nominations, Bill Emmons then moved and Kevin Rice seconded that the Town Clerk cast one ballot for Eric Chase. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

- Lister, 3 year term ending at Town Meeting 2018

There were no nominations for the position, and it remains unfilled.

- Lister, 2 year term ending at Town Meeting 2017

There were no nominations for the position, and it remains unfilled.

- Auditor, 3 year term ending at Town Meeting 2018

Laura Kent nominated Nancy Matthews. She spoke of Nancy's qualifications and background in purchasing, and her interest in continuing to help the Town, as she has been serving as an appointed Auditor since March. There were no other nominations, and Bill Emmons moved and Liz Hatfield seconded that the Town Clerk cast one ballot for Nancy Matthews. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

- Trustee of Public Funds, 3 year term ending at Town Meeting 2018

Kevin Rice nominated Rachel Bibeault, who has been filling the position as an appointee since March. Rachel spoke to the assembly and outlined her previous experience working for a lawyer in Massachusetts who specialized in trusts. There were no other nominations, and Bill Emmons moved and Liz Hatfield seconded that the Town Clerk cast one ballot for Rachel Bibeault. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Article 2: Approve a budget of \$1,421,461 for town and highway expenses for FY2016

Liz Hatfield moved and Bill Emmons seconded that the voters approve the budget as shown in the Addendum to the 2014 Annual Report.

Hazel Harrington asked about a figure on page 3 that showed a "0" figure for prior years delinquent taxes, and Treasurer Ellen DesMeules responded that during a meeting with accountant Chad Hewitt from Sullivan Powers & Co., P.C., it was explained to her that there should always be a "0" in the delinquent taxes line so that potential income is not overstated.

Sherman Kent asked the Selectboard to explain quickly why they all approve of this budget. Phil Dechert responded that they did all agree to the presented budget, and that there were compromises on all sides. Paving numbers increased so that the road crew can keep on top of maintenance, which is ultimately less expensive than rebuilding a neglected road. In the Town Offices, salary numbers increased to provide proper and adequate compensation for time and the work that is being done. He feels that utilizing reserve funds will help to even out budgets, and his hope is to get a predictable figure of what it takes to run the town. Michael Reese responded that at this point the budget shows an approximately five cent increase and 13% overall increase over last year's tax rate. Good compromises were made, and the process of reworking the budget was improved. He stated that going forward we can be more efficient in budgeting, and that maintaining a high level of service is the intent, which is reflected in this budget. He thanked his fellow Selectboard members for their hard work on the reworked budget. Eric Chase thought that there were numbers from the previous budget that simply looked out of place, and that with a good amount of work most of those issues have been resolved or clarified.

Orson St. John asked about cuts to the Reserve Funds, most notably for Highway Equipment and the Fire Department. There are some big expenses coming up and he feels they need to be explained and planned for. Phil Dechert responded that there is money in the reserve account for mandated SCBA replacement for the Fire Department, and that the Equipment Reserve was not funded this year due to

that expense. Michael Reese pointed out that the Highway Reserve was funded \$25,000, but that the line item had moved to page 10 of the Addendum, which could have caused some confusion.

Eleanor Pizzani asked about the decrease in the Sheriff's budget for patrol service on page 7. Phil Dechert and Michael Reese both indicated that they were not certain exactly why the number presented was lower than previous years, but pointed out that the figure was carried over from the 2014 Town Report and was not one of the reworked numbers. They also felt that perhaps this number might be increased again in future budgets if found necessary.

Gerry Fields asked about the reduction in funding for repaving (page 10), and Phil Dechert noted that most of the money allocated for repaving was moved from that line item to the Paving Reserve Fund. He explained that having the reserve fund will allow the Town to have a place to deposit future grants received for paving. Orson St. John asked for clarification about establishing a reserve fund – namely, doesn't it need to be warned? Phil Dechert replied that it does, and that in this case the Paving Reserve Fund was voted on at the regular Town Meeting in March.

Sherman Kent wished to thank all those who attended and provided input at the Selectboard budget meetings throughout the spring. He expressed that he thought the budget should be passed.

Frank Perron asked about the expected increase in dispatcher expenses from Woodstock. He also asked if the Sheriff's patrol budget should be moved from the "Emergency Services" heading, as they do not respond to emergencies, or if the heading should be changed to "Public Services". Phil Dechert said that the projected increase in the dispatcher expenses would not come until next year's budget, and that the Town's chart of accounts is being changed to better reflect the accounting for each department.

The budget outlined in the Addendum to the 2014 Annual Report was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Article 3: To raise taxes in the amount of \$930,762 for FY2016

Terry Kenison moved the article, and Bill Emmons seconded. With no added discussion, the article was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Article 4: To collect taxes in two installments on September 11, 2015 and February 12, 2016

Kevin Rice moved the article, and Anne Bower seconded. Phil Dechert explained that the reason for the change in the first collection date is that the state often does not have the information we need to set the school tax rate until the last possible minute, which leaves little time for the Treasurer and Listers to get the tax bills out. Andy Hutt stated that there is no difference between a machine stamped or hand stamped postmark cancellation, and Phil explained that the provision was for private homes and offices with self-printed postage. At this time the article passed by unanimous voice vote.

Article 5: Other business

Laura Kent commended the Treasurer, Ellen DesMeules, for her hard work this past year in getting the accounting process up to speed and exceeding standards around the state.

Betsy Rhodes thanked the road crew for their efforts in mowing the invasive wild chervil before it went to seed. If anyone would like more information about combatting these invasive plants they can feel free to contact her.

Bill Emmons moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Fielder, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

Date:

