

**POMFRET**  
**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**March 3, 2020**

Moderator Kevin Geiger called the meeting to order at 9:02am. He noted that the meeting was being digitally recorded.

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

At this time Kevin went over the basics of Robert’s Rules, then read the names of the birth and deaths in 2019, and called for a moment of silence in memory of those who are no longer with us.

3. The following officers were elected:

Selectboard	3 year term	Emily Grube	Unopposed
Selectboard	1 year term	Steve Chamberlin	Unopposed
Selectboard	1 year term	Chuck Gundersen	Unopposed
Treasurer	1 year term	Ellen DesMeules	Unopposed
Cemetery Commissioner	3 year term	vacant (Diana Tuthill declined nomination)	
Lister	3 year term	Neil Lamson	Unopposed
Auditor	3 year term	Gennie Lawrence	Unopposed
Town Agent	1 year term	John Putnam	Unopposed
Library Trustee	3 year term	Betsy Rhodes	Unopposed
Library Trustee	3 year term	Tina Clifford	Unopposed
Library Trustee	1 year term (to finish out a 3 year term)	Chuck Gundersen	Unopposed
Library Trustee	1 year term (to finish out a 3 year term)	Heather Durkel	Unopposed
Trustee of Public Funds	3 year term	Marge Wakefield	Unopposed

4. Norm Buchanan moved that the Treasurer be authorized to collect current taxes pursuant to 32 V.S.A 4791. Alan Graham seconded the motion, which then passed by unanimous voice vote.

5. Anne Bower moved that the Town appropriate the sums of \$41,500 for the Abbott Memorial Library and \$12,000 for the Cemetery Commission, and Kurt Clifford seconded. Anne explained that the library board has been working on ways to improve accessibility to books and programs, including broadcasting program nights via Woodstock Public Access TV, and highlighted some upcoming events including the Winter Moth Storytelling and Vermont Reads program. The motion to fund passed by unanimous voice vote.

6. Bill Emmons moved and Ron Rhodes seconded the motion for the Town to appropriate the sum of \$9,779 to support the following social services: \$2,500 to EmpowerUp! – Windsor Central Mentoring Program; \$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); \$900 to Pentangle Arts; and \$400 to WISE. The motion to fund the service organizations passed by unanimous voice vote.

7. Bill Emmons moved that the Town appropriate the sum of \$3,800 for the Woodstock Council on Aging to run the Thompson Senior Center, and Anne Bower seconded. Bill and Anne both spoke about the Meals on Wheels Program, rides, resources and medical equipment, educational and exercise programs, and the Gen2Gen program that pairs community youth and seniors in a fun activity. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

8. Bill Emmons moved and Alan Graham seconded the motion to appropriate the sum of \$2,500 for the Ottauquechee Health Foundation. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

9. Kevin Geiger stepped aside as Moderator for this question, as he works for the regional planning commission, to avoid appearance of a conflict of interest. John Peters Jr. (Selectboard) took up the gavel. Anne Bower moved that the Town raise \$10,397 for a Regional Energy Coordinator, and Norm Buchanan seconded. There was discussion of the need for the position from many perspectives, whether the position had been laid out well enough in a coherent job description, and whether this position could instead be filled by a volunteer energy committee. Speaking in favor of the article were Anne Bower, Frances Uptegrove, Joanna Long, Norwood Long, and Margaret Schultz; speaking against the article were Bill Emmons, Frey Aarnio, Emily Grube, Kevin Rice, Scott Milne, Bruce Tuthill, and Amy Robb; those who contributed to the discussion with questions or clarifications were Dottie Deans, Scott Woodward, John Leavitt, and Spencer Hayes. Gennie Lawrence called the question and the assembly approved by voice vote. Following the discussion, the motion failed by majority voice vote.

10. Scott Woodward moved and Kurt Clifford seconded the motion to indefinitely table Article 10, which would have allotted an FY19 General Fund surplus in the amount of \$176,381 to be split between the following: reducing the amount to be raised in taxes (\$72,381), the Paving Reserve Fund (\$85,000), the Communications Reserve Fund (\$4,000), and the Town Building Reserve Fund (\$15,000). The motion to table passed by unanimous voice vote.

11. Anne Bower moved and Norm Buchanan seconded that the voters re-appropriate the FY19 General Fund unassigned fund balance of \$176,381 to the following purposes: \$90,000 to the Highway Paving Reserve Fund and \$86,381 to offset the amount to be raised in taxes. Betsy Rhodes was concerned with the way that this surplus appears in the Financial Statement as shown in the Town Report. Emily Grube clarified that the transfer to the Paving Reserve will show up in next year's report. Heidi Gennaro applauded the board for this article, saying that she likes getting the option to have the money offset new taxes to be raised. The motion passed by voice vote (1 nay).

12. Scott Woodward moved and Bill Emmons seconded that the Town approve the combined budget of \$1,574,871 for general/town purposes (\$405,492), highway purposes (\$1,099,800), Abbott Memorial Library and Cemetery Commission (\$53,500), and social services organizations (\$16,079). The motion passed by voice vote (1 nay).

13. Bill Emmons moved and Tom Gubbins seconded that the voters require that taxes be paid in U.S. funds in two installments (the first by 2:30pm August 21, 2020 and the balance by 2:30pm on February 5, 2021), with interest on overdue taxes to be charged at 1% per month, and all delinquent taxes will be subject to an 8% penalty in accordance with 32 V.S.A. 1674. Scott Milne thanked the board for not publishing the names of delinquent taxpayers in the Town Report, and asked if 8% was a fair amount to charge people who are already struggling to pay their taxes on time. Bruce Tuthill expressed concern that with no overseer of the poor, we have no idea what people's circumstances are. Emily Grube noted that we have over \$325,000 owed in delinquent taxes, and most of that amount is due by second home owners, not local people. Ellen DesMeules noted that we send reminders in addition to the bills, and that in this era of modern technology folks have cell phones and calendars that can remind them when their bills are due; there are abatement processes and service agencies to help the truly needy. Heidi Gennaro asked if that means that we are subsidizing delinquent taxpayers' 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> homes? Scott Woodward said yes, it impacts our balance sheet but ideally we do collect that money eventually – the majority of the unassigned balances (surplus) comes from delinquent tax collection. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

14. Other proper and necessary business:

- Kevin Geiger reminded everyone that ballot voting for the schools and Presidential Primary were across the street at the Town Offices until 7pm.
- Frank Perron told the assembly that in coordination with the Town of Sharon, the Selectboard has accepted a contract from Pike to completely redo Howe Hill Road starting in May with culvert replacement. Portions of the road will be closed at times, and it will be rough going for the next few months during the rebuild and paving process.
- Betsy Siebeck thanked Frank Perron for his service on the Selectboard, saying that he has been a public servant for as long as she has known him, giving generously of his time and resources and knowledge. She then encouraged the Selectboard to not let go of the idea of forming an energy committee. She also asked if a list could be created on the website of local service organizations that can help those who are in need find resources. Nancy Matthews echoed her comments regarding the creation of the energy committee. Ellie Pizzani noted that people can call 211 for assistance and referrals.
- Alan Graham spoke in his role as our ECFiber delegate, asking for a volunteer to serve as an alternate delegate to the board, and then highlighted a raffle for 800GB service for new subscribers. He then spoke on behalf of the Historical Society, who are actively seeking help in typing up information for their searchable database of information and artifacts in Google Drive. He also noted that the Invasive Plant Committee is active and in need of help controlling invasive species, particularly wild chervil and poison parsnip.

- Kurt Clifford thanked the Selectboard for working with the Town of Sharon on the Howe Hill Road project, and said he is looking forward to the “new” road.
- Kevin Rice thanked Alan Graham and the Invasive Species Committee for the work on eliminating parsnip and chervil – our roadsides look vastly different from neighboring towns! He also commended the Road Crew and new Road Foreman Jim Potter for doing “one hell of a job” on our roads this winter.
- Scott Woodward encouraged anyone who would like to volunteer for committees to please speak up. He also thanked Frank Perron for his work on the Selectboard, and then noted that he will be working on a Veteran’s Memorial this year and would like feedback from the public on how to best make the project a reality.
- Gennie Lawrence thanked her co-auditors Ben Brickner and Nancy Matthews for their hard work and expertise in putting together the Town Report, and encouraged everyone to take the time to read it and bring them your suggestions for future reports.
- Bob Crean asked of the assembly if there was an informal sense of whether people were in favor of opening the school again, which was met with a chorus of AYE. Heidi Gennaro remarked that we have a gorgeous school, and wondered about the possibility of getting it back and reopening as a charter school or other educational institution. Betsy Siebeck noted that it’s not a question for the Town but for the District School Board.
- Holly Strahan thanked the other members of the FAST Squad, and stressed that the current members are getting older and are close to retirement from service. She also noted that all of the current members are in North Pomfret, with no quick response in South Pomfret, and encouraged anyone who is willing to join them – training is available!
- Ron Rhodes thanked the Selectboard and the Road Crew for their work on repairing Rudge Road last summer, and noted that it couldn’t have been done without the grantwork and design help from Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC).
- Patti Kuzmickas and Bob Coates (School Board members) outlined the perimeter and drainage work that is in progress at the school building, and encouraged people to look at the WCSU website for details on the work. The next step is the replacement of the HVAC system, to which \$200,000 of the current school budget has been allocated, as well as another \$50,000 from the proposed budget for 2020-21. They noted that demographics continue to be a struggle for our small town, but the District School Board has made a commitment to fix the school building – but Bob warned that the use of the building may not look exactly how it did before.
- Ellie Pizzani promoted the upcoming Red Cross Blood Drive on March 13<sup>th</sup> at WUHSMS.
- Bill Emmons thanked Cecilia Hoyt for being our microphone runner for the meeting, and thanked Kevin for running the meeting. He expressed that TRORC has done a lot of great work for our communities, including Kevin’s work as an exceptional senior planner.

Bill Emmons moved to adjourn, Terry Kenison seconded, and the Moderator declared the meeting closed at 11:02am. The new officers were sworn to their duties by Becky Fielder.

Our thanks to Alice & Neil Lamson for providing the donuts and coffee to keep us energized!

Respectfully submitted,

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Rebecca Fielder, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

Date:

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