

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Saturday, March 2, 2024 - Woodbury Elementary School Gym

Town Moderator Stephen Murphy calls the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited, followed by a moment of silence to remember neighbors, friends and family who died this past year. Stephen reviews points of order for conducting the business of town meeting based on state statute and Robert's Rules of Order. Two attendees that are not registered voters in Woodbury are identified – Jeffrey Seaver and Emmet Gordon. With that, Stephen steps down as moderator and Chris Koteas, Woodbury Select Board member, takes the podium to oversee Article 1.

Article 1: Who shall be elected moderator ?

Patrick Flood nominates Stephen Murphy to serve as Town Moderator; Skip Marchesani seconds. Stephen is elected by voice vote and then returns to the podium to moderate the town meeting.

Article 2: To consider the printed report of the Town Officers for the year ending December 31, 2023.

Patrick Flood makes the motion to accept the article; Michael Sadler seconds. As discussion is called for, Steven Freihofner speaks to request a point of order informing the assembly that Woodbury's Hazen Union and Elementary school board representatives are available for discussion regarding the schools. Ginger Etkind requests point of order that school reps present when Woodbury's state representatives are present so the state reps can also hear about the schools. The moderator defers the presentation of the school reps to the time the state reps are present. No changes to the report are suggested.

Article 3: Who shall be elected to fill the following positions as Town Officers?

Select Board Member - 3 years: Patrick Flood nominates Chris Casey; Ellie Hayes seconds. Brandy Smith nominates Monty Shatney; Bob Blake seconds. By unanimous consent the nominations close. The moderator directs the Board of Civil Authority to conduct a vote by paper ballot. Of the 119 registered voters signed in for town meeting, 106 cast ballots. 82 votes were cast for Chris Casey; 22 votes for Monty Shatney; 1 vote for Chris Koteas and 1 vote for Brandy Smith. Chris Casey is elected for a three-year term as a Woodbury Select Board member. Alex Peltz is recognized and thanks Chris Koteas for his work as a select board member.

Lister – 3 years: Bill Condon nominates Ron Wells and is informed that Ron is not up for election this year. Carlotta Graves asks what the duties of a lister are. Bob Martin and Skip Marchesani share comments on a lister's qualifications. Bonnie Collins asks about training for a lister and shares her interest in the position and qualifications. Norman Etkind nominates Bonnie Collins; Paul Cerutti seconds. Brandy Smith shares that the town has funds for lister training. No other nominations are

given; by unanimous consent the discussion is closed. Skip Marchesani moves that the town clerk cast one vote on behalf of the town body for Bonnie Collins; Paul Cerutti seconds. Skip's motion passes by voice vote and Robin casts one ballot for Bonnie Collins. Bonnie is elected to a three-year term as a town lister.

At this point in the meeting, Norman Etkind calls a point of order to recognize Avram Patt, one of Woodbury's state reps. By unanimous consent the town body agrees to hear from Avram. During Avram's discussion, Saudia LaMont, Woodbury's second state rep, enters the gym and discussion continues. The reps provide updates on their legislative work. The town body presents questions and comments. School issues quickly become the topic and at this point Ana Peltz seeks permission to have Woodbury's reps to the Hazen Union board and the Mountain View Union Elementary School board address the town body. Ana Peltz and Darren Usinowicz (Mountain View reps) share information, relative to the discussion about schools the state reps have begun, that is specific to the Mountain View elementary school district. Questions and discussion continues centered around school issues. Then Steven Freihofner (Hazen Union rep) provides information on school funding and taxes with regard to Mountain View and Hazen, and updates on activities at Hazen. (The full discussion may be viewed on HCTV, at hctv.us/woodbury-town-meeting-march-2-2024, beginning at time 41:15.)

Auditor – 3 years: Alex Peltz nominates Jonah Meacham; John Reid seconds. With no other nominations, the moderator asks for a motion to allow the town clerk to cast one vote for the town. Darren Usinowicz makes the motion; Michael Sadler seconds. The town body approves the motion for the town clerk to cast one ballot for Jonah Meacham; Jonah is elected to a three-year term as a town auditor.

Collector of Delinquent Taxes – 1 year: Amy Eldred nominates Brandy Smith; Jonah Meacham seconds. With no other nominations, the moderator closes the nominations and calls for a voice vote. The town body elects Brandy Smith to a one-year term as Collector of Delinquent Taxes.

Cemetery Commissioner – 5 years: Patti Garbeck nominates Stephanie Appleton; Myrna Miranda-O'Neill seconds. With no other nominations, the moderator closes the nominations and calls for a voice vote. The town body elects Stephanie Appleton to a five-year term as a cemetery commissioner.

Library Trustee – 3 years: Myrna Miranda-O'Neill nominates Elisha Renne; Jonah Meacham seconds. With no other nominations, the moderator closes the nominations and calls for a voice vote. The town body elects Elisha Renee to a three-year term as a library trustee.

Library Trustee – 3 years: Robin Durkee nominates Dede Slayton-Avery; no one seconds. With no other nominations, the moderator closes the nominations and calls for a voice vote. The town body elects Dede Slayton-Avery for a three-year term as a library trustee.

Library Trustee – 2 years: Diana Peduzzi nominates Chris Koteas; no one seconds. With no other nominations, the moderator closes the nominations and calls for a voice vote. The town body elects Chris Koteas for a two-year term as a library trustee.

At this point in the meeting, at 12:05, the moderator calls for a recess in the meeting with the meeting to be reopened at 12:30. At 12:40 the meeting resumes.

Article 4: Shall the town have its taxes paid to the Town Treasurer, as tax receiver, 60 days after tax bills are mailed (estimated due date to be Oct. 24, 2024) Taxes would then become delinquent and be turned over to the Collector of Delinquent Taxes for collection with a penalty that increases by $\frac{1}{2}$ percent per month of delinquency to a maximum of 6 percent for one full year or more of delinquency, and interest of 6 percent per year or .5 percent per month.

Steven Freihofner makes the motion to approve Article 4; Ellie Hayes seconds. The Moderator calls for discussion. Shaun Fielder asks if there will be a problem with the mail delivery of the tax notices. Brandy Smith assures the town body there will not be a problem. With no further discussion, the moderator calls for a vote. By voice vote, the town body unanimously approves Article 4.

Article 5 - Shall the voters appropriate \$19,850.00 for the support of the Woodbury Community Library?

Chris Koteas makes the motion to approve Article 5; Paul Cerutti seconds. With no discussion on the article, the moderator calls for a vote. By voice vote, the town body unanimously approves Article 5.

Article 6 – Shall the voters appropriate \$13,000 for the support of the Woodbury Cemeteries?

Ellie Hayes makes the motion to approve Article 6; Angela Grace seconds. With discussion, Dee Dasein asks a question about how the money is spent. Amy Eldred replies for the Cemetery Commission and shares cemetery plans for the coming year including mowing, cleaning headstones, and a new road to the green burial section of South Woodbury Cemetery. Lucinda Smith shares that funds are also used for cleanup of the cemeteries, including tree removal and debris. With no further discussion, the moderator calls for a voice vote. The majority of the town body votes to approve. There are some No votes.

Article 7 - Shall the voters appropriate \$17,850.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to be added to the truck replacement fund, paid July 01, 2024?

Skip Marchesani makes the motion to approve Article 7; Jonah Meacham seconds. With no discussion on the article, the moderator calls for a voice vote. The majority of the town body votes to approve. There is one NO vote.

Article 8: Shall the voters appropriate \$123,515.73 to fund the operations of the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department? The Capital Replacement Fund paid in full by January 01, 2025, in the amount of \$32,000.00, and the Operating Expenses of \$91,515.73, paid in quarterly installments (\$22,878.93) starting July 01, 2024.

David Morse makes the motion to approve Article 8; Sara VanHof seconds.

At this point in the meeting, Paul Cerutti, Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) chief, comes forward to address the town body to inform residents of the increased workload the fire department is facing, particularly with its first responder's emergency services, mostly in response to the opioid crisis. He shared his concerns at the pre-town meeting and was asked then to again share these concerns at town meeting. Calls have increased dramatically over the last few years in Woodbury in response to the increasing problem of substance abuse in the state and in Woodbury. Associated with this increase is also an increase in crime and the number of dangerous situations the WVFD finds themselves involved in. With no police coverage in Woodbury, the WVFD has felt it has no choice but to deal with these dangerous situations in its obligation to protect the safety and health of those calling for help. The WVFD has also focused on protecting its own volunteers and providing its members with mental health services to cope with the stress and trauma from this work. These increases in calls have driven up the WVFD's budget.

Questions and discussion with residents follows. Many are surprised this is happening in Woodbury. There is discussion of a group of town residents gathering to discuss this issue and possibly coming up with actions that would address this problem for those residents that are suffering with addictions and also help the WVFD and its volunteers with the stress they face responding to these needs. Paul feels that concerned residents gathering to better understand the situation and brainstorm possible ways to help could be good, stressing that awareness of the issue is the first step to a solution. Several residents express thank yous to the WVFD for the work they do. There is also mention of an auxiliary group forming to aid with the administrative side of the WVFD. (The full discussion may be viewed on HCTV, at hctv.us/woodbury-town-meeting-march-2-2024, beginning at time 2:14:20.)

With discussion closed, the moderator restates Article. By voice vote, Article 8 is passed unanimously.

Article 9: Shall the voters appropriate up to \$100,100.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department, due November 1, 2024, for the purpose of financing the cost for construction of a new Fire and Emergency Operations center at a total cost of \$1,300,000.00?

David Morse makes the motion to approve Article 9; John Gordon seconds. Discussion follows as Paul Cerutti again addresses the body to explain the increase in this year's appropriation and the overall cost of the new firehouse. He shares the status of the new firehouse project with permits all set and a loan of \$1.3 million approved, though final costs are still unknown and hopefully a May 1st start for the construction. Plans for the old firehouse are in flux. The flooding of the village in July 2023 damaged much of the WVFD equipment. It is uncertain whether FEMA funding will result in reconstruction of the old firehouse in a flood-resilient manner, or relocation of the firehouse. Research into other funding sources, including the strong possibility of USDA funding to remedy the loss of use of the old firehouse are underway. Shaun Fielder shares his knowledge of the USDA budget/funding path. All town tax monies, donations and other funding already appropriated for the new firehouse are in the bank and are awaiting the beginning of construction. Insurance issues for the old firehouse are also discussed.

Paul also advocates bonding the costs of the new firehouse. The WVFD cannot do this but the town could, if it chooses to do so. Bonding the cost would need approval of the select board and final approval by the town through voting by Australian ballot and would entail the town, if approved, to borrow the funds needed for the final cost of the construction. This would significantly reduce the interest costs for the construction and eliminate the yearly approval of an appropriation to the WVFD for the new firehouse. Bonding could not be done until all costs are final for the construction. There is a non-binding approval of applause for pursuing bonding by the town once all work and costs are final. With discussion closed, the moderator repeats the article and calls for the vote. The article is approved unanimously by voice vote.

Articles 10 - 30:

Skip Marchesani moves that Article 10 through Article 30 be decided with one vote; Goddard Graves seconds. The town moderator explains the process and option possibilities for voting on several articles with one vote. Questions and discussion follows about the raising of appropriations at town meeting; advocating for increases to various agencies and non-profits through our state legislators and how the request for town appropriations are used as indication of support for the various groups requesting funds from the towns. Discussion closes and the moderator calls for the vote. Approval of Articles 10 through 30 is passed unanimously by the town body. Please see the Woodbury Town Report for the year 2023, page 8-10 for a listing of Articles 10 – 30 in the warning for town meeting.

Article 31: Shall the voters authorize General Fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$501,815.97, of which \$232,204.97 shall be raised by property taxes and \$269,611.00 by non-tax revenues?

Skip Marchesani moves to approve Article 31; Robin Durkee seconds. Discussion follows with a question from Jim Schweithelm about non-tax revenues. Diana Peduzzi responds, referring the town body to page 24 of the town report – General Fund Revenue/Expense Statement. Under the Revenues, several non-tax revenues are listed, starting with line item 01-4-02 and continuing to 01-4-06, including government grants, permits, licenses, and services. Brandy also responds to the question. With no other discussion, the moderator calls for a voice vote. The article passes unanimously.

Article 32: Shall the voters authorize Highway Fund expenditures of \$654,462.00, of which \$531,792.00 shall be raised by property taxes and \$122,670.00 by non-tax revenues?

Paul Cerutti moves to approve Article 32; Skip Marchesani seconds. With the call for discussion, Paul Cerutti points out that the select board and road crew have managed to repair all of the significant July flood damage to the town highways without having to borrow any money; this was not true for many other towns; Paul thanks them for that effort. He also expresses hope that next summer will not see flooding so the road crew can catch up on its routine summer maintenance. Lizzy Higgins also expresses thanks to Brandy Smith for her work with the town highway funding for the July flood repair. Michael Sadler asks if the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) road erosion grants/ work is part of the town highway budget and if any of that work was done in 2023. Michael Gray responds

that yes the MRGP work is part of the town highway budget and that no MRGP grant projects were finished in 2023 (one project was started but not completed because of the flood) but that 3 grants for road work have been approved and the road crew will get to them with the coming summer. With no more discussion, the moderator calls for a vote. Article 32 is passed unanimously.

Article 33: To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting. Sara VanHof makes the motion to take up Article 33; Carol Ray seconds. The moderator calls for discussion.

Sara VanHof points out there was no vote on Article 2 and is told by the moderator a vote is not required as the article asks the town to “consider” the town report. Patrick Flood asks how and where a change/correction to the town report would be recorded.

Chris Casey reminds town residents that voting on school issues, including the budgets, will be occurring on Town Meeting Day and encourages residents to vote.

Carol Ray thanks the town for 30 years of support for the Woodbury-Calais Food Shelf.

Skip Marchesani shares his role assisting the town office as Woodbury’s volunteer IT person. He expresses his concern regarding the potential hacking of the town office computers, encouraging the town to consider strengthening and improving the computer systems the town uses. He also puts out a plea for a knowledgeable IT assistant.

Patrick Flood would like the town to follow up with the suggestion made by John Reid concerning issues raised by Paul Cerutti earlier in the meeting. John suggested town residents form an informal committee of interested town residents to explore the problems, causes and possible solutions centered around the substance abuse in Woodbury with aid in mind to the WVFD.

Myrna Miranda-O’Neill asks the town body to consider passing a non-binding resolution regarding the conflict in Gaza involving Israel and Palestine. Myrna reads the resolution that calls for an immediate ceasefire of the conflict and the unconditional release of all hostages. Myrna states that other towns will be considering this resolution in their town meetings. The moderator expresses the opinion that this issue falls outside the jurisdiction of the town and rules Myrna’s request out of order.

The moderator then states that those still present at town meeting could discuss this if they so choose. Goddard Graves expresses his opinion that the moderator’s ruling is out of order. The moderator makes a motion requesting the body to decide on his ruling that the resolution is out of order. More discussion follows. There is a motion to call the question, which is approved. Then, following more discussion on points of order, there is the vote on whether to sustain the moderator’s ruling. Through a show of hands, the moderator’s ruling is sustained with 25 votes to sustain, 21 to not sustain. The moderator then reminds the body they can still discuss Myrna’s resolution if they choose by voting to suspend the rules; this requires a 2/3rds majority vote. Darren Usinowicz makes the motion to suspend the rules in order to consider Myrna’s resolution; Skip Marchesani seconds. There is more discussion, then with a hand vote, 30 residents favor suspending the rules; 9 oppose. Myrna then restates the

resolution as a motion: "In response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Israeli-Palestine conflict, we call for an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages." Goddard Graves seconds. With discussion, Diana Peduzzi asks where the town's non-binding decision will be registered. Myrna responds that she does not know, but the statement would be recorded as part of this meeting. More discussion follows concerning this. Norman Etkind suggests an amendment to the resolution, adding the statement that Hamas lay down its arms; David Morse seconds this amendment. The amendment is discussed. Lizzy Higgins makes the motion to call the question on the proposed amendment; Michael Gray seconds. By hand vote, the motion to call the question passes. By voice vote, the amendment does not pass. The body then addresses the resolution motion. Ellie Hayes makes a motion to call the question; Jayne Nold-Laurendeau seconds. By hand vote, the motion to call the question passes. By voice vote, the resolution passes.

In closing Article 33, Jayne Nold-Laurendeau thanks Stephen Murphy for his skillful guidance of the pre-town meeting and the town meeting. There is no further discussion on Article 33.

Article 34: To adjourn the meeting

Roy Demers makes the motion to adjourn the meeting; Jayne Nold-Laurendeau seconds. With no discussion the body, by voice vote, approves the adjournment of the meeting.