

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING -2020

Minutes approved 3/9/2020

**THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF MONKTON ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED AND
WARNED TO MEET AT THE MONKTON CENTRAL SCHOOL ON
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 29, 2019 AT 10:00 A.M. FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:**

**ARTICLES 1, 7, 8 AND 9 TO BE VOTED ON BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ON
TUESDAY MARCH 3, 2019 AT THE MONKTON FIRE STATION
POLLS WILL BE OPEN FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M.**

Selectboard Members Present: Bill Martin, Anne Layn, Marikate Kelley, John McNerney, Stephen Pilcher.

Moderator Ken Wheeling called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

ARTICLE 1: To elect all Town Officers by Australian Ballot.

Will take place Tuesday, March 3rd.

ARTICLE 2: To receive and act on the Report of the Auditors as submitted.

Charlie Huizenga moved Article 2. Jerry Schwartz seconded. All voted in favor. The moderator declared that ayes have it and that the vote was in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 3: To set the time and date for the payment of Real Estate Taxes to be paid to the Town Treasurer.

Roger Wallace moved to set the time and date of the payment of Real Estate Taxes to be paid to the Town Treasurer as Nov 15th at 5pm. Charlie Huizenga seconded. It was noted that this is a Sunday. The Moderator asked the house for permission for Mr. Wallace to modify his motion. The House agreed. Roger Wallace then moved to make the date Nov 16th at 5pm. The moderator declared that the ayes have it and the vote was in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the Town empower the Selectboard to set the Tax Rate when the Grand List is finalized?

Mike Bushey moved. Mark Rickner seconded. R. Wallace asked a question about pg 42 in the town report that there are 3 tax rates listed. In past years, the difference is 0. The question is that there should be a sum difference? Kathy Nolan (Asst. Town Treasurer) noted that she gets the download from the State and she is unsure as to why the State's numbers are different and she wants to do some research on it. R. Wallace asked that is there a potential that there is \$750,000 worth of property in town not being taxed on? Kathy says she doubts it. S. Burr explained how the State gets our numbers.

The moderator then called for the vote. The moderator noted that the ayes have it and the vote is in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Voters approve the following requests by various Agencies?

- a) **Addison County Community Action Group (Hope) \$1,250.00**
- b) **Addison County Court Diversion & Community Justice \$ 550.00**
- c) **AgeWell \$1,100.00**
- d) **Addison County Home, Health & Hospice, Inc. \$1,946.00**
- e) **Addison County Parent/Child Center\$1,600.00**
- f) **Addison County Readers \$450.00**
- g) **Addison County Transit Resources \$850.00**
- h) **American Red Cross \$250.00**
- i) **Bristol Family Center \$250.00**
- j) **Bristol Recreation Dept. \$2,000.00**
- k) **Bristol Rescue Squad \$7,500.00**
- l) **Counseling Service of Addison County Inc. \$1,600.00**
- m) **Elderly Services Inc \$800.00**
- n) **Green Up Vermont \$150.00**
- o) **Hinesburg Food Shelf \$500.00**

- p) **Homeward Bound (Humane Society) \$250.00**
- q) **Hospice Volunteer Services \$300.00**
- r) **John W. Graham Emergency Shelter \$1,000.00**
- s) **Lewis Creek Association \$550.00**
- t) **Monkton Mentors Program \$500.00**
- u) **Open Door Clinic \$500.00**
- v) **Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation District \$198.00**
- w) **Retired & Senior Volunteer Program \$460.00**
- x) **Rural Fire Protection Program \$100.00**
- y) **Vergennes Area Rescue Squad Inc. \$600.00**
- z) **Vermont Adult Learning \$700.00**
- aa) **Vermont Center for Independent Living – Addison \$195.00**
- bb) **Women Safe Inc. \$1,250.00**

Total: \$27,399.00

Wendy Sue Harper moved to vote the total amount by the block. Charlie Huizenga seconded. The moderator called the vote and the moderator declared that the ayes have it.

Discussion ensued.

Sue Ledoux thanked the community for supporting the Monkton Mentoring Program.

Becky Bonvouloir from Home Health & Hospice thanked the town for the support they have received over the years.

Kristin Blanchette, MAUSD School Board member, noted that a lot of the organizations support children and families and thanked the town for their support.

Heather Bessette of the Counseling Service of Addison County spoke and gave a synopsis of what the organization does and thanked the town for their support.

The moderator called for a vote and the moderator declared that the ayes have it. Motion passed.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters approve the following sums of money for the listed purposes?

- a) **Salaries and General Expenses \$335,717.60**
- b) **Highway Expenses \$1,084,826.94**
- c) **Monkton Volunteer Fire Department \$55,000.00**
- d) **Russell Memorial Library \$31,948.00**
- e) **Monkton Museum and Historical Society \$1,000.00**
- f) **Recreation Fund \$6,000.00**
- g) **Agricultural and Natural Areas Fund \$15,000.00**
- h) **Highway Capital Equipment Fund \$30,000.00**
- i) **Tax Stabilization Fund \$(30,000.00)**

Total: \$1,529,492.54

Wendy Sue Harper moved to vote as a block. Susan DeSimone seconded.

The moderator declared that the ayes have it and voted in the affirmative.

Tom Steadman asked about the new truck that has been on order. S. Pilcher noted that the truck was ordered in Fall 2018. In November 2019 it went to Viking to get the snow plow equipment put on and it is still there. It has not yet been delivered.

Mike Bushey asked why it has taken so long. S. Pilcher noted that from what they understand

is that there is a big demand for these trucks right now and ours is in a large queue.

Tom Steadman asked about a check not being sent in that was supposed to be sent in. S. Pilcher noted that the answer to that is yes. There was some confusion between the Selectboard and the Treasurer regarding the procurement of the loan. The issue was resolved by spending out of the Capital Equipment Fund (\$60K) and a 70K loan will be taken out to pay Viking once we get the truck.

Mark Boltz-Robinson asked a question re: highway capital equipment fund (page 61 of the town report) and replacement plan. A backhoe and grader are marked for replacement this year. He asked about maintenance going forward. J. McNerney answered that part of reason the Town went over budget was maintenance. The road crew found a lot of "cobb jobs" that have been done over the years and our current mechanic thinks we are getting ahead of it. Mark also wanted to thank Ben and crew for all the work they do and that they do a great job.

Roger Wallace asked about deficit, primarily due to delinquent taxes. Are we running in to a trend? Kathy Nolan noted that as of now we are running ahead. The town did not do a tax sale this year. Currently have 119K in delinquent taxes. She feels the town has gotten better about sending people notices every month.

Roger Wallace asked why we are still having deficit if we are collecting more delinquent taxes. Kathy noted that we always have a deficit. S. Pilcher attempted to explain.

Jeff Fortin asked about town vehicles...asked if we were getting duct tape repairs, were we paying duct tape salaries.

Jim Jewell asked why we are spending all this money while other towns are subbing this out.

Ben Hollwedel, Road Foreman, arrived and spoke. Ken first asked House if OK since he is not a resident. All said yes.

Mark Boltz-Robinson re-asked his question to Ben.

Tom Steadman asked if the highway dept. is fully staffed. Ben said yes.

Jim Jewell asked why we can't sub some of this out. Ben doesn't think this is unreasonable and it is something he thinks we could explore.

Jeff Fortin asked that the Selectboard and Ben look into subbing out some work. The moderator noted to do it under new business.

Roger Wallace asked about the bottom of page 54 about 59K deficit and covering it via tax stabilization fund. It appears we are not adding \$ to the stabilization fund at this time. He asked how much is in there and why are we not adding into it if we are spending out of it. S. Pilcher noted that there is no reason to be upset/worried about running a deficit if it is because people haven't paid taxes yet. The money will come in. Re: the tax stabilization fund...the -\$30K is to take money out of that fund to put into the general fund and that is what the stabilization fund is for.

Leah Benner asked about snow fences. B. Hollwedel noted that he attended a meeting of the Addison County road foremans and they all concurred that snow fences are not of any real

value for the time and effort. B. Hollwedel decided to try going without them this year as an experiment.

Peter Straube asked about pg 62 proposed expenditures. 2 items going up - volunteer Fire and Russell Memorial Library up. Jane Low, chair of the Library Board, explained their budget. Noted that on Page 58 that last year they asked for less because they had money from prior years that had not been spent. This year they don't have that left over funding. Matt Dupont, representing the Fire Department, explained that the extra is to start a truck replacement fund that was asked for at least years meeting.

Julie Pelland asked about ANAC fund and how it benefit the taxpayers. Sue Mahoney, committee member, referred to page 29 of the town report as an explanation. The money is used for conservation of land in Monkton. Wendy Sue Harper added that it gives us a future that has ag and open land.

Roger Wallace asked about page 52, 10K budgeted for new muni building expense. S. Pilcher noted that the 10K is what we are spending in fees to get us to the bond vote on Tuesday.

Jeff Fortin explained what happened at last year's meeting re: the truck fund for Fire Department

Moderator called the vote, and the declared that the vote was in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voter authorize the Selectboard to appoint the Town Treasurer pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §2651f effective March 2021. Article to be voted by Australian Ballot.

Will be voted on Tuesday March 3

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voter authorize the Selectboard to appoint the Delinquent Tax Collector pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §2651d(a)(1) effective March 2021. Article to be voted by Australian Ballot.

Will be voted on Tuesday March 3

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town of Monkton vote to adopt the proposed Monkton Town Plan dated 2020 – 2028 to amend and replace the previous Monkton Town Plan, which expired in March 2019? Article to be voted by Australian Ballot.

Will be voted on Tuesday, March 3

Roger Wallace moved to recess to allow the state representatives to speak. Robin Hobbs seconded. Moderator declared an aye vote. Meeting recessed at 11:10am.

Recess adjourned at 11:32.

Betsy Brown made a motion to recess for lunch. Jeff Fortin seconded. Moderator declared a vote in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at 11:33.

Mike Bushey made a motion to come out of recess. S. Pilcher seconded. Meeting came out of recess at 12:04pm.

ARTICLE 10: Does the Town of Monkton support the distribution of natural gas in parts of the Village District as per the Memo of Understanding signed by Vermont Gas in June 2013.

Mark Boltz-Robinson moved to discuss. Jane Palmer seconded.

Mark Boltz-Robinson suggests tabling this until a future town meeting due to the fact that VT Gas is under investigation for the safety pipeline.

Eugenie Doyle stated that her position is that if people have the current pipeline through their property and were promised the ability to connect, that they should connect. However, she feels any public buildings should NOT utilize natural gas as she would like to see us moving away from fossil fuels.

Jane Palmer gave a history of the safety investigation.

Jeff Fortin noted that he is a pipeline supporter, but is concerned about the safety concerns at this time.

Jeff Fortin made a motion to postpone this vote at least one year to get these safety concerns resolved. Mark Boltz-Robinson seconded.

Jane Palmer questioned how much support there is in town for more fossil fuel infrastructure.

Eugenie Doyle asked that the Selectboard to speak about the MOU. S. Pilcher explained the history of the MOU.

M. Kelley noted the distribution is what was negotiated, doesn't mean those along the distribution have to hook up

Jeff Fortin wants to clarify that his motion is not a vote for or against natural gas. His motion is to delay the vote a minimum of one year.

Mark Boltz-Robinson spoke in favor of J. Fortin's motion. He also suggests that the MOU be part of the next town report so it can be reviewed if the question is on the ballot next year.

Peter Straube noted that there is a hunger to speak about this. If we wait a year, what more information will we have?

Eugenie Doyle wants clarification that if we wait a year, the MOU is still in place. Could the Selectboard go ahead and negotiate w/VT Gas prior to a year from now?

Jeff Fortin noted his assumption would be that the Selectboard cannot move on this within the year.

Roger Wallace understands that Jeff's motion was a motion to Table. Moderator noted that moderator used the word table, not Mr. Fortin

J. McNerney noted that the 5 Selectboard members will act on the will of town's vote.

Will Bown spoke to address a question concerning Vermont Gas. To address the question posed by Peter Straube regarding what will happen in the next year if we postpone this decision. Will stated, based on his understanding, a third party engineer inspection of the VT gas line installation identified several issues and was submitted to the PUC. The PUC will be reviewing/making a determination on this report in June/July.

Susan DeSimone asked if there were legal issues that would make them act.

Eugenie Doyle made a motion to add an amendment to postpone for one year during which time the Selectboard will not take action on the MOU. Roger Wallace seconded.

Mark Rickner was concerned that the motion would restrict the ability of the Selectboard to deal with VT Gas for anything.

The moderator called for a vote. The vote to Ms. Doyle's amendment was in the negative as declared by the moderator.

M. Kelley noted that it will be of substantial cost to build this distribution system, so she feels it will be easy to negotiate a delay.

Jane Palmer noted that VT Gas doesn't make money selling gas, they make money on their return on investment.

Ian Schulze asked a procedural question.

The moderator called a vote on Mr. Fortin's motion. Moderator called that the ayes to have it.

Charlie Johnson made a motion to Table Article 10 until further notice. Mark Rickner seconded.

Bob Radler called the question. Jeff Fortin seconded. The moderator called the motion in the affirmative.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow money from time to time and pledge the credit of the Town from the past and present indebtedness as may be necessary for them.

Chelsea Smiley made a motion to discuss. Pete Aube seconded.

The moderator called the question. The moderator said the aye's appear to have it and declared the vote in the affirmative

ARTICLE 12: To transact any other business proper to come before this meeting.

The moderator asked if anyone has any questions of Articles 7.

S. Burr wants to know why this is on the ballot. S. Pilcher noted that the Selectboard feels that the election process is not a great way to pick a treasurer. Anyone on the ballot needs to be a Monkton resident which restricts possible candidates. The Town also wants to make sure the position is held by someone who is competent for the job. Jeff Fortin asked if this includes the asst treasurer. J. McNerney noted that this position is already appointed. S. Burr asked about the fact that the current treasurer is up for election. S. Pilcher noted that article would be effective March 2021. S. Burr also asked about the removal of an elected official. M. Kelley noted that it is a long, complicated process.

Moderator asked for questions on Article 8:
No questions were asked

Moderator asked for questions on Article 9:
Doris Brace asked where copies were available. S. Pilcher noted at Town Hall and on the Town's website.

Dawn Griswold & Kristin Blanchette spoke as MAUSD school board members and gave a quick overview of the school district budget and the upcoming studies involving school consolidation.

S. Pilcher gave an overview of the proposal for the new municipal town building. He gave a general discussion of the bond, why the bond is worded differently, rates, payment schedule and application process. Bond article is to be voted on by Australian Ballot on March 3rd. The bond vote is on Tuesday, March 3rd.

Melody Daigle asked what will happen if the bond does not get approved. S. Pilcher noted that is not known at this time.

There was further discussion from community members with their pros and cons for a new building.

Jeff Fortin noted that he was thankful to see many younger people in the room.

J. Fortin would like to formally request to work with the road commissioner to subcontract out some of the work that needs to be done.

George Parker, Scoutmaster, wanted to point out the photos on Page 91 and explain the pictures. He thanked the Girl Scouts for the pop up library on the future town hall site. George also thanked the town for using the bottle drop. George also noted that he was delighted to see Andy Letourneau's photo on the front of the page of the Town Report.

Mark Rickner put in a plug for Monkton First Response and would love to see more members.

The moderator and members of the public thanked Anne Layn for her years of service to the Town of Monkton on the Selectboard with a resounding applause and standing ovation.

Bailee Layn-Gordon put in a plug for the local 4-H group and explained the pollinator garden and spoke about the PTO Read-A-Thon.

S. Pilcher spoke as the Town Emergency Management Coordinator. He noted that the town will be getting some FEMA funds from the Halloween storm. He also noted he has some CDC

prints outs re: CoronaVirus.

Mark Boltz-Robinson noted that the town Grand Juror is always unfilled. If he understands correctly, the State Legislature has eliminated the necessity for the position of grand juror.

Theresa Payea and Lee Kauppela stood and spoke on behalf of the Cedar Lake Association.

Ann Marie Letourneau noted that she was very happy to see that the town report was dedicated to her husband. She thanked everyone that has helped and reached out to her family. She was thanked with a round of applause and a standing ovation.

S. Pilcher moved to adjourn. B. Martin seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 1:58pm.

Monkton Town Clerk
Received and Recorded
on _____ January, 2019 at _____ AM/PM

Stephen Pilcher, Chair Selectboard

Anne Layn , Vice Chair Selectboard

Marikate Kelley, Member Selectboard

Attest: _____
Sharon Gomez, Town Clerk
Monkton Town Clerk received

William Martin, Member Selectboard

John McNerney, Member Selectboard