

TOWN INFORMATIONAL HEARING

SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 2021

Remote Meeting (Zoom)

(Approved 3/8/21)

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARNING - 2021

THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF MONKTON ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED AND WARNED TO MEET AT THE MONKTON FIRE STATION ON TUESDAY MARCH 2, 2021 BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M TO VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING

ARTICLES BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT.

AN INFORMATIONAL HEARING TO DISCUSS ARTICLES WILL MEET REMOTELY ON FEBRUARY 27, 2021 AT 10 A.M. HEARING IS WARNED SEPARATELY

S. Pilcher called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

S. Pilcher gave a quick tutorial on how the meeting will operate on Zoom. At the start of the meeting there were 72 attendees including the Selectboard members.

Selectboard Members Present: Stephen Pilcher (Chair), John McNerney (Clerk), Bill Martin (Vice Chair), Marikate Kelley, Paul Low

Selectboard Members Absent: None

Jerry Schwartz, Moderator, then asked for questions Article by Article.

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

There were no questions.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on November 15, 2021 by delivery to town hall by that date or postmarked on or before that date? By Australian ballot.

There were no questions.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters appropriate a total of \$26,849.00 to the following social service agencies? By Australian ballot.

- 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 \$500.00
- 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) Green Up Vermont \$150.00
- n) Hinesburg Food Shelf \$500.00
- o) Homeward Bound (Humane Society) \$250.00
- p) Hospice Volunteer Services \$300.00
- q) John W. Graham Emergency Shelter \$1,000.00
- r) Lewis Creek Association \$550.00
- s) Monkton Mentors Program \$500.00
- t) Open Door Clinic \$500.00
- u) Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation District \$198.00
- v) Retired & Senior Volunteer Program \$460.00
- w) Rural Fire Protection Program \$100.00
- x) Vergennes Area Rescue Squad Inc. \$600.00
- y) Vermont Adult Learning \$700.00
- z) Vermont Center for Independent Living – Addison \$195.00
- aa) Women Safe Inc. \$1,250.00

J. McNerney noted that a Monkton resident who cannot participate today asked for him to ask if there are any new social service agencies participating this year. S. Pilcher noted no. There was one new request but the Selectboard decided not to include it so it can be discussed at next year's meeting.

Laurie Earle wanted to make a comment on Elderly Services: They recognized the difficulties everyone has faced during the pandemic year. It was the director's wish to avoid placing any additional budgetary pressures on the towns which they serve. They hope to be included on the list next year.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters authorize General fund expenditures for operating expenses of:

- a) General Fund Deficit \$59,024.33
- b) Salaries and General Expenses \$428,259.55
- c) Monkton Volunteer Fire Department \$60,000.00

d) Russell Memorial Library \$35,096.51
e) Monkton Museum and Historical Society \$1,000.00
f) Recreation Fund \$7,500.00
g) Agricultural and Natural Areas Fund \$15,000.00
h) Highway Capital Equipment Fund \$30,000.00
of which \$430,165.59 shall be raised by taxes and \$232,563.80 by non-tax revenues? By Australian ballot.

Susan Mahony asked if the Board could explain non tax revenue sources. S. Pilcher noted that they are all the revenues in the Town Report on page 46. It is for things like clerk fees, liquor licenses, delinquent taxes/interest, DRB fees, etc.

Marilyn Cargill asked if the Board could explain the salary & general expense line which increased 92k over last year. S. Pilcher stated it is because of the principal and interest on the new Town Office and Library building. He noted that next year he would like to break out long term debt as a separate line. This year's long term debt schedule is on page 57 of the Town Report at the bottom. It combines both highway and general fund budget. The fire station long term debt will be retired next year. The principal payments for the new building are 85k/year. The Town has a 20 year loan with less than 2% interest.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters authorize Highway fund expenditures for operating expenses of:

a) Highway Fund Deficit \$68,020.77
b) Highway Expenses \$1,194,229.65
of which \$706,314.22 shall be raised by taxes and \$555,936.20 by non-tax revenues? By Australian ballot.

J. McNerney noted that the Highway Fund deficit was not due to overspending on highway department items. It was mainly due to the fact we have not yet received reimbursement from FEMA for some work that was done last year which should be covered by FEMA grants. He suggested S. Pilcher could explain in more detail and correct if necessary. S. Pilcher noted that FEMA won't give us any money until we have completed all the projects applied for. These included repairs to Piney Woods Rd and to a large culvert on Mountain Rd, which had a temporary culvert installed. Some grant monies should be arriving shortly for the Mountain Road culvert. The highway increases this year is because we are awaiting the engineering to be done for a permanent fix on Mountain Road. There will be some expenses for that that we'll be reimbursed from FEMA. FEMA gives 75 % of expenses, and we get another 12.5% from the State. The expenses will go up quite a bit, but revenues will go up as well because we will be reimbursed for most of that money.

Laura Farrell asked how much of the highway funding is linked to what is dictated by Federal models. She also asked for a Road Foreman status update. S. Pilcher noted that the money

aside from FEMA money in general comes from the State, on the order of 147K per year for road maintenance based on how many miles of road we have. We are part of the municipal road grants program which is somewhat federal...part of attempts to clean up the lake. Grants have been given to cut down on road erosion, especially dirt roads that are steep. The road crew has ditched and put in rip rap to cut down on the sediment flow into the lake. This work must be done to state specifications in order to qualify for the grant. The Road Foreman, Ben Hollwedel, has been a very good road foreman. He was "poached" - offered a job he couldn't refuse by a local contractor. The Town is currently advertising for a replacement. Interviews may start as early as the Board's first meeting in March.

Sam Burr asked about the increase in hot mix and asked where the paving will take place. S. Pilcher noted that last year the SelectBoard, due to legislation allowing temporary changes to accommodate issues during COVID, was that the Board could change the budget. The Highway Foreman suggested he not do any paving last year. He only did patching of roads. J. McNerney noted that we are catching up for what was deferred last year.. S. Pilcher noted he was unsure about where paving would take place.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters approve a sum not to exceed \$118,000 for the purchase of a tractor and road side mower. Article to be voted by Australian Ballot.

Susan Mahony asked the Board to explain the need for this and ask for clarification as to how many pieces of equipment it is. S. Pilcher noted that the roadside mowing is to keep the rights of way clear. The current equipment that is used is decrepit. He noted that when we went out for bids on new equipment, they looked for a trade in and the dealer is not interested in our current tractor because it is so far gone. It's a tractor with some modifications plus the mower attachment. Susan Mahoney then clarified that we are replacing one mower with a new mower. S. Pilcher stated yes, the Town only has one and the tractor is dedicated to that task.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town of Monkton vote to adopt the proposed Unified Planning Document (UPD) approved by the Selectboard on January 25, 2021 to amend and replace the previous Unified Planning Document? Article to be voted by Australian Ballot.

Miranda Fisk asked if there is a document that outlines the specific details of the changes. S. Pilcher stated he can give her something. He noted that there are not many changes and that the warning explains what the changes were. Wendy Sue Harper, Planning Commissioner, noted that on the Planning Commission's page on the town website is what she is looking for. Most of the changes are addressing energy requirements that came from the town plan and few small changes that the DRB wanted to see. Marilyn Cargill, Planning Commissioner, added that a few of the additions were clarifications on the conversion of seasonal camps and that the DRB wanted information/applications to be submitted to them digitally.

The moderator then opened the floor to other comments and questions.

Betsy Brown.. Thanked Ben Hollwedel for all his work. She also announced that the DRB is currently looking for an assistant to help with all the various administrative tasks the DRB deals with as well as take minutes at their meetings. This is a paid position and hours vary depending on the number of applications before the Board at any given time. If anyone is interested in hearing more about the position, they can email Betsy at bbrown@monktonvt.com or call the Town Clerk's office and leave your contact information.

Kristin Farrell, as a member of the Monkton Historical Society & Museum put in a plug for a survey they are currently hosting to gauge people's thoughts about having a Museum in town and the possible purchase of the current Town Hall for that space.

John McNerney stated that Ben Hollwedel texted regarding the question on Article 5 about paving. Ben said that there will be no new areas being paved. The plan is to repave Mountain Road and as much of Monkton Rd as possible depending on state grants. John also wanted to thank Sharon Gomez, Clerk for her phenomenal job for all she has done to keep Town Hall running smoothly and keeping everyone safe while visiting there and at elections.

MariKate Kelley recognized Jess Demerett who is stepping down as Recycling Coordinator and thanked her for all her work.

Steve Pilcher thanked and recognized Sam Burr for his work as a lister. The Town is looking for a replacement.

Paul Low gave a big shout out for the Recreation Committee, especially Paul Stetson who has helped keep the walking paths clear-thank you! He thanked Stephanie Murray for her 18+ years of service to the Town. She helped bring Morse Park to fruition.

Ian Schulze thanked the dog park folks and thanked public for supporting and enjoying the park. He also asked S. Pilcher to describe the lister position. S. Pilcher noted that the listers are responsible for determining what the assessed rate of properties are and generating the Grand List. They have office hours on Wednesday mornings. Sam Burr, outgoing Lister, added that usually there are site visits but because of COVID they haven't been able to do that this year. The pandemic has also dramatically changed the value of real estate and it is unknown what this means for the future. The tax mapper has also changed and will be digitized so that the records will be available online.

Betsy Brown thanked the Dog Park Committee for bring the park to fruition.

Jaime Schulte stated, that in the continued theme of Morse Park, here has been great community effort to eradicate the wild parsnip issue. It will take a few more years to get it under control and then after that it will be a maintenance issue.

Wendy Sue Harper thanked Charlie & Jane Huizenga for everything they've done for the Town for so many years.

John McNerney thanked Teri Fitz-Gerald and all others who helped with creating and running the Little Free Pantry at the Church.

Eugenie Doyle thanked everyone who worked on the building committee for the new Town Hall & Library. She noted that it has been great to see progress on the building.

Teri Fitz-Gerald, in response to John McNerney, noted that the food pantry has been able to help a number of people in town and has been a town wide effort. She thanked all those who donate to it whether it be monetarily or with food donations. She also thanked Travis Guilmette for the cabinet he made as his Eagle Scout project. She noted that if you know someone in need have them contact the Church.

Senator Chris Bray asked to speak and gave an overview of the work that has been done at the State House.

Stephen Pilcher noted that the Town is in need of an animal control officer. He stated that he has been in contact with the Town of Bristol: there appears to be some interest in rehabbing their pound. Currently we don't have a place to take dogs that need to be impounded. Please let the Selectboard know if you are interested.

S. Pilcher thanked everyone for joining. Next year Town Meeting will be held in the MCS gym where debate and voting can happen on the floor like years past.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy Brown