

Town of Monkton
Minutes of Annual Town Meeting
Saturday March 4, 2023 10:00am

Jerry Schwarz, Town Moderator, called the meeting to order at 10:04am. There were 94 citizens in attendance.

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

The moderator said Article 1 will be voted on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at the new town hall. Polls will be open from 7am to 7pm.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on November 15, 2023 by delivery to town hall by that date or postmarked on or before that date?

Wendy Sue Harper moved to authorize payment of property taxes on November 15, 2023. Mark Boltz-Robinson seconded. The motion was voice voted in the affirmative, and so declared by the moderator.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters appropriate a total of \$27,749.00 to the following social service agencies?

- a) Addison County Community Action Group (Hope) \$1,250.00
- b) Addison County Court Diversion & Community Justice \$ 550.00
- c) AgeWell \$1,500.00
- 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) Bristol Family Center \$250.00
- i) Bristol Recreation Dept. \$2,000.00
- j) Bristol Rescue Squad \$7,500.00
- k) Counseling Service of Addison County Inc. \$1,600.00
- l) Elderly Services \$800.00
- m) Green Up Vermont \$150.00
- n) Hinesburg Food Shelf \$500.00
- o) Homeward Bound (Humane Society) \$250.00
- p) John W. Graham Emergency Shelter \$1,000.00
- q) Lewis Creek Association \$550.00
- r) Monkton Mentors Program \$500.00
- s) Open Door Clinic \$500.00
- t) Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation District \$198.00
- u) Retired & Senior Volunteer Program \$460.00
- v) Rural Fire Protection Program \$100.00
- w) Turning Point Center of Addison County \$500.00

- 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

Wendy Sue Harper moved that the listed social service requests be considered as a block. Deb Gaynor seconded. Sue Ledoux said please look into the Monkton mentoring program. It's a great benefit for all. John McNerney asked what the motion was: a motion to approve, or a motion to decide how to vote on the measure. The moderator replied that it was to vote on the measure itself and that it would be considered as a block. Kristin Farrell wanted to thank people for their support of the Monkton Museum and Historical Society. She would like to hear from anyone who has history to share. **The motion was voice voted in the affirmative, and so declared by the moderator.**

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

- a) General Fund Deficit \$45,160.19
- b) Salaries and General Expenses \$518,039.98
- c) Monkton Volunteer Fire Department \$98,200.00
- d) Russell Memorial Library \$37,046.33
- e) Monkton Museum and Historical Society \$1,500.00
- f) Recreation Fund \$8,500.00
- g) Agricultural and Natural Areas Fund \$40,000.00
- h) Highway Capital Equipment Fund \$30,000.00

for a total of \$778,446.50 of which \$553,036.50 shall be raised by taxes and \$225,410.00 by non-tax revenues?

Bill Martin moved to authorize general fund expenditures for the listed operating expenses as a block. Wendy Sue Harper seconded. The motion was voice voted in the affirmative, and so declared by the moderator.

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

- a) Highway Fund Surplus \$(138,176.04)
- b) Highway Expenses \$1,011,311.24

for a total of \$873,135.20 of which \$636,946.20 shall be raised by taxes and \$236,189.00 by non-tax revenues?

Wendy Sue Harper moved to authorize the highway fund expenditures. Bill Martin seconded. Deb Gaynor said she thinks this is an appropriate time to thank the road crew for getting everyone safely here this morning. Paul Molzoni wanted to know about the budget surplus. Stephen Pilcher said one of the major reasons for the budget surplus was due to the \$220,000 in the budget allocated for external contractor work on the Mountain Road culvert replacement which is a FEMA project. That project has repeatedly been delayed waiting for the design work and FEMA approval, so the monies were not spent although they were in the budget. The Selectboard has changed how the grant expenses and revenues for the Mountain Road project are accounted for in the budget to improve how this is reported in the future. Michael Hurlburt was looking at the gravel for road upgrades and wondered if there was enough gravel to build up the roads. He noted that Monkton used to have a road commissioner.

Stephen Pilcher said Monkton also used to have a road commissioner and not a road foreman. He said we have four young guys working on the road crew, and they have had increased compensation to keep them here. He noted that there have been increases in gravel expenditures in the last two years, and he thinks we are making progress. Paul Low said Monkton had some turnover in the road crew, as many other businesses have seen. He feels that the new staff is working hard to learn the work. He sees their hard work. Tom Kenyon wanted to address the surface of the roads. He thinks the road crew is doing excellent work, but that the rough surfaces are making for a lot of wear and tear on cars. He asked how the town determines when grading should happen and what is the best way to notify the town of issues. Paul Low said the weather has been active, and with the many miles of roads the crew is doing a good job. Paul Low has been driving the roads as a lookout and reaches out to the road foreman when he sees an issue. He said the road foreman has a board that has projects scheduled. It takes time to get to the work. He suggested contacting the road foreman, Paul Low on the Selectboard, or Sharon Gomez to express concerns. **The motion was voice voted in the affirmative, and so declared by the moderator.**

Senator Chris Bray was introduced by the moderator. It is his eleventh year in the senate. He spoke about the Affordable Heat Act. He explained an organized campaign to say no to the act, and the misinformation from that campaign. He said Vermont must reduce emissions by 2050 legally and the intent is to gradually make changes. Heating and transportation cause the most emissions. The act reduces fossil fuel use and generates money to support the transition. He said that the current trajectory is unaffordable fiscally. He noted electricity has a stable cost over time, and oil has a volatile cost. He said participation was voluntary.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the Town of Monkton sell the 1859 Town Hall building.

Robin Hopps moved the question of selling the 1859 Town Hall building. Bill Martin seconded. Peter Straub offered an amendment; he wondered if a sales agreement could require maintaining the building in a manner consistent with its historical appearance. Bill Martin indicated this was possible. Peter Straub proposed an amendment that the sales agreement include that the **buyer maintains the exterior of the building in accordance with the national historic preservation standards.** Jerry Schwarz asked if the building was on the registry. Kristin Farrell explained some history around the building. She said it is on the registry, and it would take about \$100,000 to bring the building into good repair. Deb Rickner wanted to know who it would be sold to in the town? Marikate Kelley said originally the voters approved selling the building when the new town hall was built. Since then some residents asked the town to keep ownership of the building. She said being on the national registry doesn't require maintaining the building. **Steve Pilcher seconded the amendment.** Mark Rickner said he is most interested in the appearance of the building and asked what are we trying to preserve. Lauren Parren would like to see a straight vote without the amendment to see if the town wants to keep the building. Nina Badger said requiring the amendment might make it harder to sell. She said the money from the sale of the building is a small amount and suggests not selling it. Joan Hallway feels it's an iconic part of Monkton and the little bit of money it will cost to hold onto it is worth it. The moderator directed the voters to only discuss the amendment at this time, as we were not discussing the motion to sell at this point. Deb Rickner said it looked obvious

that the town wants to keep the building. Mark Bolz-Robinson said the old building has problems and costs. He feels the amendment is the best way to go forward to preserve its nature. John Kelliher would like to add an amendment to the amendment to preserve the building and to sell it to the MMHS for \$1. The moderator said the amendment was not germane and expressed concerns about specifying a price. The proposed amendment was not accepted. Adrian Raphael said she would not go for the amendment, it's too broad. She feels it will limit and drag out the process. Robin Hopps said the amendment presumes that the building will be sold. There was a general response that the article's subject is to sell or not to sell. The moderator was unable to call the voice vote. **A hand vote was counted by the board of civil authority: 58 for, 24 against. The amendment carried.**

Stephen Pilcher said it would cost about \$2000-2500 per year to maintain the building. He said painting would be required next year for a cost of \$24,700. Cassandra Corcoran asked if the town promised to sell the old town hall? Marikate Kelley answered that the original proposal was to build a new town hall and sell the old one and the library. Stephen Pilcher said the old Russell Memorial Library sold yesterday and will net \$61,000 to the town. He said there is a \$29,000 deficit remaining in the building fund after the sale. Kristin Farrell said the 1859 building is structurally sound. Eugenie Doyle said we are talking about two things: the significance of the building and whether and can pay for it. She suggested ARPA money could be used to fill in the deficit. John McNerney said he would love to see the character of the building preserved and used by the community. He explained that he could not speak for the select board, since they had not voted on the issue. However, in several select board meetings, he had expressed interest in giving it to a community-oriented organization that will take responsibility for the building, maintenance, grant writing, etc. He doesn't want it to turn into a money pit. No one has indicated they are willing to take that on. Mark Bolz-Robinson said the old town hall had various deficiencies and fixing it wasn't worth it as discussed in 2019. He is in favor of maintaining the historical building but doesn't see how we can keep that building on top of the new town hall. Teri Fitz-Gerald lives next door to the old town hall. She thought a lot has changed since 2019 and feels the community could use it. She would like to take more time to see if we can develop something more. She said keep it now and sell it later. Joan Holloway said we can look for grant money instead of tax payer money. Kathy Charbonneau asked why it was a vote for town meeting instead of all the taxpayers. Stephen Pilcher Monkton is limited regarding what can be voted by Australian Ballot. It wasn't a choice for this issue. Kevin Lambert said short term need and long term goals run into conflict. He thought going back on the original vote to sell the old building was not in good faith. He feels we have community space which was a result of community efforts. He feels one organization does not have the money to keep the building. He is in favor of selling the building. Mark Rickner asked if the Selectboard is bound to take the highest offer for the building? The Selectboard answered that they felt the attorney needed to be contacted to provide an answer. Mark Rickner asked if the amendment could include: The Selectboard may make the sale, but not based solely on the highest bid. The moderator said it was not germane. John McNerney said we would need to consult the town attorney, but he believed the Selectboard has some flexibility in selecting the buyer, including non-financial considerations. Gabe Calvi wanted more info about the sale of the Russell Memorial Library. Stephen Pilcher said it was sold to someone who will lease it to a baker or other individual. Nancy Goodrich asked if we could give selling the building more time?

Barb Davis called the question. Mark Rickner seconded. The motion to call the question was voice voted in the affirmative, and so declared by the moderator. The moderator was asked to repeat the motion in its current form prior to the vote: **Shall the town sell the 1859 building with the amendment that the buyer preserve the exterior of the building in accordance with national historical preservation standards. The voice vote could not be determined. The moderator called for a division of the house. The Board of Civil Authority counted raised hands. 57 for, 33 against. The article carried.**

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters of the Town of Monkton vote to adopt the proposed Unified Planning Document (UPD) approved by the Selectboard on January 24, 2023 to amend and replace the previous Unified Planning Document? Article to be voted by Australian Ballot on Tuesday, March 7 at the new town hall.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters approve a sum not to exceed \$240,000 for the purchase of a Mack dump truck.

Wendy Sue Harper moved shall the voters shall approve purchasing a dump truck for a sum not to exceed \$240,000. Bill Martin seconded. Stephen Pilcher said this is a scheduled equipment replacement. And it takes over a year to get a replacement. Mark Bolz-Robinson is in favor of a new truck. He asked if the money covered the dump truck, plow and all. The Selectboard responded yes. **The motion was voice voted in the affirmative, and so declared by the moderator.**

ARTICLE 9: Shall the legal voters of the Town of Monkton, as part of the Mount Abraham Unified School District, approve the withdrawal agreement with the Lincoln School District, which includes the property transfer of the Lincoln Community School building and bond as well as a negotiated portion of the MAUSD Education Reserve Fund in the amount of \$74,754? The details of the terms can be found in the full withdrawal agreement posted on the MAUSD website, in MAUSD schools and at the town clerk's office. Article to be voted by Australian Ballot.

ARTICLE 10: To transact any other business proper to come before this meeting.

The moderator reminded everyone that anything discussed under article 10 was advisory only. Stephen Pilcher introduced the town administrator Stan Wilbur and the new Selectboard member Walter Crandall. Deb Rickner asked about ARPA funds. She wondered about a sidewalk in the Ridge. She would like to see the old signboard on the ridge replaced with an electronic sign. Stephen Pilcher said the Selectboard is always open to new ideas and the list of projects is listed on the town website. ARPA money has been distributed to: \$50,000 to Maple Broadband, replaced fundraising money for local non profits, up to \$25,000 committed for natural resources mapping, possibly for a town forest project that is underway, possibly to help fund accessory dwelling units to help with affordable housing, and other proposals. Marilyn Cargill asked when those funds need to be obligated. Stephen Pilcher answered they need to be committed by December 2024 and spent December 2026. Callie Brynn of the Monkton

Forest Committee spoke about the opportunity to purchase over 400 acres for the town. She said the goal is to work with the community to create our town forest. The town's contribution to the project would be leveraged by significantly larger contributions from State, Federal, and other sources. Deb Gaynor spoke as a representative for Addison County Solid Waste Management District. The district closed on a parcel of land in New Haven to build a regional dropoff. The hours will be based on the Middlebury transfer station's hours. She recognized Jessica Demeritt's work at the Monkton recycling center. Marikate Kelley thanked Bill Martin for his generosity to the town and his work for the Selectboard. He was given a standing ovation. She also thanked Dawn Griswald for her many years of work on the School Board. Robin Hopps read a prepared update on the Monkton Museum and Historical Society. John McNerney said there are Girl Scout cookies for sale in the hall. He encouraged the formation of a new Troop so he could continue to support his Thin Mint consumption. He noted there is no lunch today, but hopes some group will take that on in the future. Stephen Pilcher said the town got a grant to update the local hazard mitigation plan. He said if anyone wants to help out they will be meeting for the next few months. Eugenie Doyle said there were under 100 voters here today. She would like to revisit when town meeting will occur. She would like to see more participation in our democracy. Paul Molzoni moved to adjourn. Mike Bolz-Robinson seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Demeritt