

## TOWN MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 9, 2022

Officers present: Moderator Dan Hazelton; Selectboard members Dorothy Heinrichs, Tamara Fairbank, and Aaron Allen; Selectboard Secretary Sandi Pierson; Road Agent Scott Sanborn; Treasurer Trish Weekes; Building Inspector Doug Weekes; Tax Collector Sharon Proulx; Budget Committee members Dave Stacy and Bob Proulx; School Board Representative Kathy Stacy; Planning Board Vice Chair Donald McFarlane; Planning Board secretary Hilary Allen; Cemetery Trustees Gulley Dunlap and Anita Watson-Garland; Supervisors of the Checklist Betsy Coble, Beth DiFrancesco, and Laurie Sanborn; Town Clerk Michelle Goffreda.

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To commence the meeting, Dave Stacy leads the room in reciting the pledge of allegiance.

Moderator Dan Hazelton calls the meeting to order. He reviews some rules of the town meeting, including that participants must be registered voters in the town of Orange, all discussion must be relevant to the article on the floor, and all amendments must be made in writing. He reminds all participants to respect everyone's right to speak and to be heard, and describes how the deliberation will proceed: with reading each article aloud, then asking someone to move the article and someone else to second the motion, then opening up the floor for discussion. To vote "yes" will always mean a vote to adopt the article and to vote "no" is a vote to defeat it.

Dan summarizes the results of the town election (Article 1), commenting that there were no contested races and everyone whose name was on the ballot was elected.

ARTICLE 1: (by official ballot) To elect the following town officers for the following terms: 1 Selectperson (3-year term), 1 Moderator (2-year term), 1 Town Clerk (1-year term), 1 Treasurer (1-year term), 1 Tax Collector (1-year term), 1 Deeding Agent (1-year term), 1 Road Agent (1-year term), 1 Budget Committee (3-year term), 1 Cemetery Trustee (3-year term), 1 Trustee of Trust Funds (3-year term), 1 Supervisor of the Checklist (6-year term), 2 Planning Board Members (3-year terms), and any other officers as required by law.

The moderator proceeds to Article 2.

ARTICLE 2: To see if the Town will authorize the Tax Collector to accept the prepayment of taxes pursuant to RSA 80:52-a. Taxpayers shall be allowed to prepay taxes no more than two years in advance of the due date of the taxes. No interest shall accrue to the taxpayer on any prepayment, nor shall any interest be paid to the taxpayer on any prepayment which is later subject to rebate or refund.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

Scott Sanborn moves; Kathy Stacy seconds.

Donald asks the moderator: what is the current law regarding tax prepayments; what is the current policy that is being changed by the adoption of this article?

Dorothy responds that the current law is not really changing, since the article has appeared on the warrant annually and continually passed in previous years. The town must vote on it every year in order for prepayments to continue being accepted.

No more discussion is made on the article. Article 2 passes by voice vote.

Because Dan had not initially heard Donald's question, Dan encourages everyone to use the microphone when speaking to make sure they are heard.

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to accept the increases in hourly wages and stipends recommended in the Report of the Salary Study Committee.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

*Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0)*

Scott Sanborn moves; Judith Lindahl seconds.

Sandi Pierson moves an amendment to the recommendations of the Salary Study Committee regarding the annual stipend for the Trustees of Trust Funds:

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to accept the increases in hourly wages and stipends recommended in the Report of the Salary Study Committee with the amendment that there is no decrease in the stipends for the Trustees of the Trust Funds and instead have them not increase or decrease from 2021.

She says: "I appreciate the work of the salary committee but ask that the trustee stipend remains as it is, rather than being cut in half." Although the committee had recommended a decrease in the Trustee of the Trust Funds annual stipends, the amendment would approve the Trustee stipends with no change from the previous year.

Scott Sanborn seconds this amended article.

Donald McFarlane contributes to the discussion that, although Karen McFarlane (unable to be present at the meeting) has not submitted vouchers for payment working as one of the Trustees and as the town Welfare Director, it doesn't mean she didn't do any work for the offices and he knows she did volunteer hours of her time working on them. The recommendation of the salary study may have been in reference to the fact that Karen said she didn't need the \$100 from the town but did not feel it was appropriate to lower it to 0. She was under the impression that it was the unanimous opinion of the Trustees but it appears that this wasn't the case. Donald comments that in general, the annual stipends are important for retaining people in these roles for the town.

Before taking a vote, Dan reads aloud the article as amended.

Article 3 passes as amended by voice vote.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate eight thousand dollars (\$8,000.00) to be paid into the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

*Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0)*

Donald McFarlane moves; Alex Smith seconds.

There is no further discussion on the article.

Article 4 passes by voice vote.

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) to be paid into the Town House Capital Reserve Fund.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

*Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0)*

Aaron Allen moves; Scott Sanborn seconds.

Kathy Stacy asks: “would someone speak to the improvement plan for the townhouse?”

Doug Weekes volunteers as the person best able to respond to Kathy’s question. He begins by saying that the townhouse is 120 years old now and we want to maintain the building in good condition rather than rebuilding it, which would be a tremendous expense. Those involved in the restoration project are looking into doing something low-pitch with the roof, as there is a heavy snow load every winter and the roof is currently supported by a wood frame. The Restoration committee looked into restructuring it so that the townhouse will continue to exist in structurally sound condition.

Doug adds that the committee also has dedicated a lot of time looking into ways to pay for the structural improvements. He and Trish Weekes have been researching available grants and have found that the town will likely to be able to get \$50,000-150,000 in grant money for maintaining historic buildings. However, the town first has to put up some money, and \$15,000 seems appropriate. The amount of work done for restoration depends ultimately on how much money is available.

Donald inquire of Doug as to how urgent the repairs are and how much they are expected to cost.

Doug answers that the urgency depends on willingness to take risks. Currently there are cracks in the beam; a structural engineer who assessed it did not give any urgent red lights but it’s unwise to wait until the house is in urgent danger of collapse to reinforce it. The structural engineer thought it was a very good idea to do something in the reasonably near future. The minimum cost would be \$35,000-\$40,000. This is considering that the entities that give grant money need to approve how it’s done to maintain the historic nature of the building, which adds to the cost, but of course they’re the ones giving half the money.

Sharon Proulx asks if there will be renovations done to the townhouse electrical systems.

Doug responds that this is not so important to the entities that give grants for historical buildings, but they are aware that if we’re taking siding off, it would be an opportunity to do maintenance on the electrical systems as well. The cost of this and whether it might be covered by the grant would have to be negotiated down the road.

Dan reads the article aloud again before taking a vote.

Article 5 passes by voice vote.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate four thousand dollars (\$4,000.00) to be paid into the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of revaluation of real estate. Revaluations of all real estate are required by law every five years.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

*Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0)*

Dorothy moves; Aaron seconds.

There is no further discussion on Article 6.

Article 6 passes by voice vote.

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) to be paid into the Town Road Improvement and Repair Capital Reserve Fund.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

*Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0)*

Scott Lurgio moves; Scott Sanborn seconds.

Donald asks Scott Sanborn whether he believes the amount is adequate.

Scott responds - "The answer is no, I don't believe it's enough to address what we need to do in the long run. The flooding of 2 years ago was addressed in last year's meeting. The work has been completed and the invoice has been submitted, which goes to the state and then it goes to FEMA. It is being processed at the state level currently. This is a slow process but it is moving forward. We know we will be settling a hefty bill as a town, but I cannot in good conscience ask for a ton of money right now knowing we have the burden of these emergency repairs first, which is why I'm keeping it a modest amount."

Scott elaborates that in terms of future repairs, paving and asphalt are desperately needed but it would just be a lot to ask everyone to pay an extra \$600-800 per year to cover the cost of it. If people do want this, then he would happily go forward with it, but realistically the town may have to put up with the poor condition of the asphalt for a time.

No further discussion is made. Article 7 passes by voice vote.

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee's recommended sum of \$256,704.00, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, for the ensuing year for the Town's general operations.

*Recommended by the Select Board (3-0)*

*Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0)*

Scott Sanborn moves; Alex Smith seconds.

Dan opens the room for discussion but no further discussion is made on the article.

Article 8 passes by voice vote.

ARTICLE 9: To hear the reports of agents, auditors, committees and officers and to transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Dorothy thanks everyone who participated in the Salary Committee this year for their work and thanks the town officers for another great town meeting. Tamara then thanks Dorothy for everything she has done for the town during her 11 years serving on the Selectboard and leading everyone through some emotionally charged moments and a global pandemic with always such a calm and respectful civility. Tam adds that Dorothy has really taught her to value expressions of thanks and that her dedication over the years has been so much appreciated by everyone.

Dan thanks all the election officials and congratulates Betsy on becoming a member of the Selectboard. He says thank you to Judith for spearheading the salary committee, and that it has been such a pleasure to serve with Dorothy for the past 11+ years, elaborating that her leadership is what we needed during a tumultuous time and that we owe a lot to her.

Finally, Beth DiFrancesco announces that her and Laurie Sanborn will need to appoint another Supervisor of the Checklist and that anyone who is interested in the position should get in touch with them.

Dan Hazelton thanks everyone for coming out and concludes the meeting.

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Michelle Goffreda  
Town Clerk of Orange