

**2017 Town of Wallingford
Annual Town Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2017
Wallingford Elementary School**

Town Moderator A. Jay Kenlan opened the annual town meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Kenlan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Selectboard Chair Bill Brooks introduced Selectboard members Nelson Tift, Rose Regula, Gary Fredette, Mark Tessier, and Town Clerk Julie Sharon

Mr. Kenlan reviewed the rules of the meeting and read the warning as follows: The legal voters of the Town of Wallingford, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Wallingford Elementary School on Monday evening, March 6, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. to act upon the following articles. The polls will be open on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Wallingford Town Hall for the purpose of voting Australian Ballot.

ARTICLE I. To elect the following Town Officers by Australian Ballot: a Town Moderator, Grand Juror, Town Agent and First Constable, each for one-year terms; two Selectboard members, one for two years and one for three years; an Auditor for three years; a Lister for three years; a Town Clerk and Town Treasurer for three years; a Trustee of Public Funds for three years; and a School Director for Mill River Union Unified School District for three years.

ARTICLE II. Shall the Town vote to have scholarships provided under Title 16 V.S.A., Section 2535, the same to be applied for on or before April 28, 2017 at the Mill River Unified Union School District Office? Bob Soule moved for the adoption of Article II; Ruth Anne Barker seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE III. Shall the Town vote to have one-half (1/2) of the fiscal year 2018 (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018) property taxes and fire protection taxes paid to the Town Treasurer on or before October 16, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. and the remaining one-half of the fiscal year 2018 property taxes and fire protection taxes paid to the Town Treasurer on or before April 16, 2018 at 4:30 p.m.? Payments are physically due in the Town Office; post-marked dates will not be accepted. Rob Carey moved for the adoption of Article III; Don Emery seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE IV. Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford vote to appropriate a sum not to exceed \$1,077,548 for the General Operation of the town, with an amount not to exceed \$728,492 to be raised in Property Taxes for fiscal year 2018?

Chair Bill Brooks noted that the overall budget is down \$4,500 with the amount to be raised in taxes also down \$22,000. The Administration budget is down \$12,000 because of reduced lister salaries and the elimination of funding the reappraisal. The Insurance budget is up \$12,000 due to increased insurance premiums. The Town Government budget is up \$6,000 as legal fees were increased by \$3,000 to cover property value disputes; an increase was made for transfer station hauling fees and the implementation of accepting food scraps July 1st; and for the purchase of a new computer for the Clerk's office. The Highway budget is up \$29,000 due to the following: 1) increasing the gravel budget by \$10,000; 2) budgeting \$2,500 for a flashing radar speed sign near WES (the school is matching \$2,500 and a citizen is donating \$1,000); 3) \$2,500 budgeted for state-mandated annual catch basin cleaning; and 4) \$10,000 budgeted for the purchase of a small pick-up truck to reduce the workload on the Ford 550. The Capital budget is down \$23,000 as the town made its last payment on the Stone Meadow reclamation loan. The Recreation budget is down \$20,000 because the tennis courts were rehabilitated last year.

Mr. Brooks announced that stickers will be required on vehicles entering the transfer station starting September 1st. One sticker will be included in each tax bill mailed out in August. Additional stickers can be purchased at Town Hall for \$3 each after July 1st. This is an effort to ensure only Wallingford residents are using the transfer station.

Rob Carey moved for the adoption of Article IV; Don Emery seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Nan Dubin asked if there were any funds in the budget for cemetery budget stone repairs. Mr. Brooks replied that the budget covers for mowing some of the cemeteries three times a year. He reported that the Selectboard was recently asked to consider increased funding for maintenance of the "closed" cemeteries in town; however, it was too late to include in the FY18 budget. Elaine Warzocha stated that the Wallingford Historical Society has been paying for brush removal and mowing in some cemeteries for many years; however, their finances are dwindling. Mr. Brooks said that they will look into developing a budget for the next fiscal year once a maintenance plan can be put in place.

Rob Carey asked if the decreased lister salary budget is adequate to pay for a professional assessor if the lister positions are eliminated. Bill Brooks replied that assessor's expense is charged to the "lister salaries" line.

Jill Burkett made a motion to increase Cemeteries Expense #5153 from \$1,000 to \$3,000; Nan Dubin seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Kenlan read amended Article IV: shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford vote to appropriate a sum not to exceed \$1,079,548 for the General Operation of the town, with an amount not to exceed \$730,492 to be raised in Property Taxes for fiscal year 2018? Cindy

Daubenspeck moved for the adoption of Article IV as amended; Ruth Anne Barker seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE V. Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to borrow money from time to time as may be required? Sue Thayer moved for the adoption of Article V; Bob Soule seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE VI. Shall the Town approve the Reports of the Town Officer as submitted? Nan Dubin moved for the adoption of Article VI; Don Spruit seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE VII. Shall the voters authorize the elimination of the Office of Lister and replace it with a professionally qualified assessor appointed by the Selectboard who shall have the same powers, discharge the same duties, proceed in the discharge thereof in the same manner, and be subject to the same liabilities as are prescribed for listers or the board of listers under the provision of Title 32?

Head Lister David Ballou stated that he is not running for re-election. Listers today have to be trained in order to adapt to the duties of the job. All three listers recommend putting this article before the voters. David Ballou moved for the adoption of Article VII; Erika Berner seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Mike McMahon asked if the hired assessor is certified. Mr. Brooks responded that the assessor is state certified and fully licensed and has worked for the town for nearly two years. Zoning Administrator Jeff Biasuzzi added that the Town's assessor works for two other towns, where he is also the Zoning Administrator, and that many towns are in the same situation and are switching to "hired" assessors.

ARTICLE VIII. Shall the voters of the Town of Wallingford approve raising a sum of \$10,000 in property taxes in support of Green Hill Cemetery maintenance?

Green Hill Cemetery Vice President Bob Soule spoke on the history of Green Hill Cemetery. He reported that the cemetery operations are funded by the sale of lots, donations, burials and grants. Revenue has decreased steadily over the last few years, mainly due to a decrease in lot sales and the increasing popularity of cremations, while labor, insurance and equipment expenses continue to rise. Lynn Edmunds was hired last summer to assist with cemetery maintenance, and he recently prepared an evaluation of the operations with recommendations to cut costs. Mr. Soule and the cemetery Board hope to continue operating independently in order to avoid turning the operations over to the town.

Nan Dubin asked if this was a one-time or an annual request. Mr. Soule replied that he hopes that with the operation changes implemented and financial advice on the cemetery's

current investment makeup, that it will be a one-time request. Jeff Biasuzzi asked if the cemetery has adapted to smaller lots with cremations on the rise. Mr. Soule described the different size lots available, which accommodate a single casket or cremation, in order to stay competitive. Cindy Frederick asked if the mowing would be put out to bid. Mr. Edmunds is considering that as well; however, a quick survey is revealing that contract mowing is more expensive. Don Emery moved for the adoption of Article IV; Tom Wheeler seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE IX. The School Directors from Mill River Unified Union School District will present information related to the 2017 Mill River Unified Union School District Annual Meeting and the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 education budget for the Mill River Unified Union School District. This is an information article only – the Union School District Articles will be discussed at the Mill River Unified Union School District Annual Meeting held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 23, 2017 at the Mill River Union High School Auditorium. Articles will be voted by Australian ballot on Tuesday, March 7.

School District Director Ken Fredette reported that the Mill River Unified Union School District annual meeting held February 23rd was well attended. Handouts were given that showed a pie chart of MRUUSD's FY18 budget percentages by category, along with the FY18 Dynamics/Overview of the annual meeting. Mr. Fredette introduced School Directors Tammy Heffernan and Bjorn Behrendt, and Superintendent of Schools David Younce and Stan Pawlaczyk, Business Manager. Highlights noted: expenses are down 3.17%; voters are being asked to approve creating a \$50,000 Building Sinking Fund; Wallingford's education tax rate is projected to be down 4.58%; 11 teachers accepted early retirement along with 5 support staff, which will be replaced by 5 teachers and 2.5 FTE support staff. Long-time employees Gary Fredette and Kevin Stanley will be retiring from WES. Ken also mentioned that the MRUHS bond payment has been paid in full.

ARTICLE X. To conduct such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

Recreation Co-Director Jenn Rocque-Tifft spoke on the town's summer recreation program. Children in grades 1-6 from any town are welcome to participate in this five-week program. The program offers field trips, activities indoor as well as at the recreation field along with afternoons spent at Elfin Lake. This year's program details will be posted on the town's website and on Front Porch Forum.

Tom Wheeler asked for the status on revising the industrial zone in South Wallingford. Planning Commission Chair Erika Berner reported that they are in the throes of updating the town plan, which is state-mandated, and that the zoning regulations will be updated afterwards. Volunteers were encouraged to help write the town plan, and an open forum is planned for June 12th at the Rotary. More details to follow.

Nan Dubin asked if there was any update from the Vermont Council on Rural Development concerning the Community Visit Program. The Town has not received any word back.

State Representative David Potter stated that with the new administration in Montpelier, there is a lot of uncertainty. He spoke briefly on the Lake Champlain clean up; the Governor's plan to move funds from the general fund to the education fund, which will impact property taxes; and the process for balancing the budget in May and January of each year. Mr. Potter thanked the Wallingford residents for their support and said it is a privilege to serve in Montpelier.

With no other business to come before the body, at 8:06 p.m. Mr. Kenlan asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Don Emery moved to adjourn the meeting; Nan Dubin seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Submitted: _____

Town Moderator
Selectboard Chair
Town Clerk

