

Town of Wallingford
Annual Town Meeting Minutes-Draft
March 4, 2019
Wallingford Elementary School

Town Moderator Jay Kenlan called the annual town meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed the large crowd. He turned the meeting over to Selectboard Board Chair Bill Brooks who introduced board members Nelson Tift, Rose Regula, Gary Fredette, Mark Tessier, Town Clerk Julie Sharon, and Town Administrator Sandi Switzer.

Bill Brooks presented Mr. Kenlan with a plaque honoring his 30+ years of service as Town and School Moderator. Jay Kenlan thanked everyone for the privilege of serving the town and stated that he will be stepping down after this year as he's moving out of town.

Jay Kenlan reviewed the rules for 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 4, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. to act upon the following articles. The polls will be open on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 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, Town Agent and First Constable, each for one-year terms; two Selectboard members, one for two years and one for three years; a Delinquent Tax Collector for three years; an Auditor 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 29, 2019 at the Mill River Unified Union School District Office? Rob Carey moved for the adoption of Article II; Erika Berner seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE III. Shall the Town vote to have one-half (1/2) of the fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020) property taxes and fire protection taxes paid to the Town Treasurer on or before October 21, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. and the remaining one-half of the fiscal year 2020 property taxes and fire protection taxes paid to the Town Treasurer on or before April 20, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.? Payments are physically due in the Town Office; post-marked dates will not be accepted. Bruce Dobbins moved for the adoption of Article III; Bill Scranton 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 \$1,245,244.50 for the General Operation of the town, with an amount not to exceed

\$740,565.54 to be raised in Property Taxes for fiscal year 2020? Rob Carey moved for the adoption of Article IV; Bruce Dobbins seconded.

Bill Brooks indicated the proposed budget of \$1,245,244 is up 8% or \$91,978 over the current budget of \$1,153,267. However, the amount to be raised in taxes is down \$58,600 from \$799,200 to \$740,565 due to \$139,620 in FEMA Reimbursement Funds from the 7/2017 storm and an anticipated \$10,000 increase in ordinance fines.

The administration budget is up \$16,750 due to a 3% increase in employees' salaries and increasing the Town Administrator's hours by 4 hours a week, which accounts for \$5,500.

The appropriations budget increased \$18,193 mainly due to an increase of \$20,000 for Wallingford Rescue to purchase updated equipment.

The highway budget is up almost \$40,000 due to the paving budget increasing almost \$60,000 along with smaller increases for salt, sand, culverts and gravel. One truck loan was paid in full, which helped offset some of the increase.

The public safety budget increased \$17,500 so that Sheriff coverage can increase patrols by 10 hours per week to 40 hours.

Of the \$139,620 in FEMA reimbursement funds received, \$20,000 will reduce the amount to be raised in taxes, \$30,000 will offset the paving budget increase, and voters are being asked to approve establishing an Equipment Reserve Sinking Fund in the amount of \$89,620.

Don Spruit asked about the increase in ordinance fines. Dave Seward asked if Wallingford Rescue's request is a one-time increase. Eric Davenport stated that they have been mandated to replace two heart monitors in their ambulances. Refurbished monitors are approximately \$45,000 each; therefore, he expects they will ask for the same amount next year. Dave Seward asked if the 2018 Dodge Ram Truck has three loan payments and the answer was yes. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE V. Shall the Town approve the Reports of the Town Officer as submitted? Rob Carey moved for the adoption of Article V; Bill Scranton seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE VI. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to appoint a Constable as provided in Title 17 V.S.A. §2651a (change position from elected to appointed)? (Must be voted by Australian ballot).

Bob Soule asked how many other municipalities have considered this question. Nelson Tift explained that a change in law has limited constable duties. Constables must now complete

training at the police academy in order to have any law enforcement authority. Justin Jankus questioned why the need to have coverage by the Sheriff too, and it's because the local constable can no longer run radar, etc. The Sheriff will patrol 40 hours each week with a deputy assigned to Wallingford.

ARTICLE VII. Shall the Town stabilize the real estate taxes of the Wallingford Rescue Inc., pursuant to Title 32 V.S.A. §3840, at \$150 annually for five years commencing as of July 1, 2019? Dave Seward moved for the adoption of Article VII; Bruce Dobbins seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Mr. Seward asked why the rescue squad was even being taxed, and it was stated that nonprofit organizations are not exempt from property taxes.

ARTICLE VIII. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$1,993 to the Rutland Marketing Initiative, a collaboration of the Rutland Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Rutland Economic Development Corporation along with area municipalities and businesses with the goal of growing the economy of the region? Bruce Dobbins moved for the adoption of Article VIII; Michelle Kenny seconded. No representative from the Chamber was present to report feedback from their first marketing campaign. However, approximately a half dozen residents spoke either in support or against the long-term efforts to promote Rutland County and reverse the serious population decline. The article passed by majority voice vote.

ARTICLE IX. Shall the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for a recreation director for fiscal year 2020? Kevin Mullin moved for the adoption of Article IX; Bruce Dobbins seconded.

Kevin Mullin asked if there is a plan in place yet for the new hire. Bill Brooks said that the Recreation Committee had provided a job description for a fulltime position. However, after hearing residents input at the special meeting held in December on this issue, the Selectboard approved Article IX as presented. They felt that it was best not to jump right in with a fulltime position. We can look for someone who can continue with the current local summer program offerings on a parttime basis.

Recreation Committee Chair Michelle Kenny spoke on how the proposed fulltime position became part time. She said that the committee plans to rework the job description and duties. Andrew Seward asked if the position would be funded by recreation revenue if it became fulltime. Ms. Kenny said that the fees from programs could help offset some of the expenses. She would like to see more activities offered locally as many parents have to shuttle their children to other communities for recreational offerings. Dave Seward asked if a portion of other budgeted salaries could be earmarked towards this position. Ms. Kenny said that would be a Selectboard decision. Andrew Seward asked if the Recreation Committee really expected people to move to town because of this position. Ms. Kenny is optimistic that that will happen and added that there should be recreational offerings for all ages.

Bob Soule asked if this is a seasonal position and who would supervise this employee. Gary Fredette stated that after crunching the numbers from this year's and next year's budget, the employee could work from early summer through the fall. This employee would report to the Recreation Committee and Selectboard.

Rob Carey is opposed to this position as he expects the \$10,000 figure will develop into something bigger. He feels that offering youth theatre and other similar activities in Wallingford is too large of an effort to offer in every town.

Kim Phillips stated that volunteers were always used when her children participated in little league. She asked where the funds would come from for capital items such as a skate park.

Katherine MacLauchlan said that we would be hard pressed to find someone at \$500 per week and to keep that scale in mind. She hopes that the position grows, which would help grow the economy. She encouraged residents to invest in this position for a minimum of five years.

Paul Dilonno asked if this employee could work in the off-season to plan programs. Ms. Kenny doesn't envision that as we need to start off small; however, some volunteer time might be considered during the winter months. Mr. Dilonno said that a lot of work has been done to the recreation area over the years – pedestrian bridge, dug outs, fencing, and playground equipment along with the acquisition of Stone Meadow. He said that it was important to have long-term vision for this property.

Bjorn Behrendt is concerned that the duties required of this part-time position can't be accomplished without proper funding.

Deb Scranton and Carol Tashie expressed their support for the part-time position.

Justin Jankus asked about grant opportunities.

Bruce Duchesne said that once this position is approved, it will cost more than is being proposed. He doesn't feel that this will draw in prospective residents given our current tax rates. Arthur Seward felt the same way. Robert Soule pointed out that only \$10,000 is being voted on tonight and that any future increased funding will require voter approval.

Dave Ballou stated that the town had a rec director for two years in the 80's and that it didn't work.

Lynn Edmunds asked if it's the town's responsibility to provide recreational activities when the facilities and opportunities are already in place.

The article passed by majority voice vote.

ARTICLE X. Shall the Town establish a Highway Sinking Reserve Fund for the purpose of Equipment Replacement and/or Highway Emergency Repairs to be funded by the \$89,620.20 surplus funds from the FEMA reimbursements received in the Fiscal Year 2019 Budget, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Section 2804? Bill Scranton moved for the adoption of Article X; Bruce Dobbins seconded. Bill Brooks explained that it took FEMA over a year to reimburse the Town after the storm-related repairs were completed. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ARTICLE XI. The School Directors from Mill River Unified Union School District will present information related to the 2019 Mill River Unified Union School District Annual Meeting and the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 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 28th in the library at the Mill River Union High School. Articles will be voted by Australian ballot on Tuesday, March 5th. There was no discussion on the school budget.

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

State Representative David Potter highlighted the new issues being considered in Montpelier that include e-cigarettes and vaping, subsidizing electric vehicles, and the cultivation of hemp.

First-time attendees Justin Jankus, Carol Tashie, Dennis Duhaime, and Andrew Seward were welcomed.

Deborah Scranton spoke about the “Communications and Events” group’s goal to make Wallingford residents aware of happenings around town through the town newsletter. They are mailing the newsletter to all residents for a three-month trial basis to determine whether it is an important means of distributing information. However, it costs approximately \$375 a month for this mass mailing. They’ve received nearly \$1,100 in donations to date and will be soliciting tomorrow at town voting.

Lynn Edmunds stated that the Selectboard has discussed whether to ask voters to change to Australian Ballot for all town meeting items. A few residents spoke either in support or against this proposal.

Jay Kenlan mentioned the dedication of the Rotary Building in the town report. Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary International, once attended school in the building.

With no other business to come before the body, at 8:35 p.m. Mr. Kenlan asked for a motion to recess the meeting. Rob Carey moved to adjourn the meeting; Erika Berner seconded. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Submitted: _____ Town Moderator

_____ Selectboard Chair

_____ Town Clerk