

Town Of Lunenburg Town Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details

Date: March 5, 2024

Time: 10:00 am

Location: Lunenburg Elementary School

Approx. No. of Attendees: 60

The Meeting was opened by Moderator Jacob Fournier at 10:00 am.

Article 1: Voting by Australian Ballot took place from 10am – 7pm.

Article 2: Kelsey Wilkinson was voted in as Library Trustee for 5 years.

Article 3: Adopted as appeared in the Warning. Due date for taxes will be October 11, 2024.

Article 4: Adopted as appeared in the Warning. Voters approve the expenditure of \$1,000/mile for Class 1, 2 and 3 Town Highways.

Article 5: The Delinquent Tax Collector had requested an increase from 5% collection fee to 8% (the maximum allowed by the State). Discussion included concerns of the amount of back taxes currently on the books and the Tax Collector's sporadic office hours. It was noted that the hours the position takes were a lot and that most of the past due taxes are from the Year 2023. The article was voted down so the Delinquent Tax Collector's fee will remain at 5%. The Delinquent Tax Collector was not present for this portion of the meeting.

Article 6: Select Board member Gary Briggs made a motion to adopt the budget as presented in the Town Report. The motion was seconded. Briggs introduced the budget by noting that the Kingdom East School Budget was not part of the Town Meeting budget discussion and that voters should show their support or concern over the budget through Australian ballot provided by Kingdom East.

A motion was made by Carroll Macie to increase line item 4912.50: Transfer to Cemeteries from \$5,500 to \$11,000. A discussion followed which included some confusion over which cemeteries in Town were included in the original \$5,500 budget figure. Deb Thomas helped explain the cemetery commissions and that the budget line item had always been split between Riverside Cemetery and the 3 Town-owned cemeteries. Macie explained that \$5,500 was not enough to cover the expense of day-to-day operations of these cemeteries. It was agreed that in future budgets Riverside Cemetery and the 3 Town-owned cemeteries will show as separate line items in the budget. It was noted that there was no report received or included in the Town Report for Riverside Cemetery. The motion to increase the line item to \$11,000 was passed.

No further discussion was held on the budget and the budget was passed by large majority of voters in a voice vote.

Article 7: Further Business: Sheriff Trevor Colby asked about the Town's Fiscal Year period. It was explained that the Town's Fiscal Year runs from January 1st – December 31st. Discussion was held about the possibility of changing that timeframe and the fact that the Town was expending money in January and February on an unapproved budget. Auditor Luke Robinson explained that money from the previous tax year (2023) remained in the bank account to help fund January and February expenses. Some voters suggested moving Town Meeting Day. Select Board member Harry Williams noted that it was State law to hold Town Meeting on the first Tuesday in March. Select Board member Briggs noted that this appeared to be Vermont tradition, but he was going to reach out the Vermont League of Cities and Towns for additional information and clarification.

State Representative Terry Williams was in attendance and discussed several legislative issues including school district budgets, rural communities, seniors, finances, etc. Williams gave a brief explanation of why the school budgets had increased so much in 2024. Voters expressed great concern over rising school taxes. Select Board member Briggs encourage voters to become more involved in Town governance, the Kingdom East School Board and contacting legislators to make their voices heard. Chris Lindley noted that coordinated eblasts could be very effective in lobbying legislators on several issues and hoped someone might take on the task of coordinating this. Williams noted that she will not be running for reelection and her term will expire on December 31, 2024. She introduced the room to John Kascenska who will be running to take over Williams' seat in the Legislature. Williams shared information about how bills get to the floor of the Legislature and urged all to keep up to date with these bills. The room gave a standing ovation to Williams for her service.

Tina Breault, Municipal Plan Committee Chair, reminded people that printed copies of the new Town Plan were available at the meeting and would also be available at the Town Clerk's Office.

Auditor Luke Robinson invited people to join the Auditor's email list so they could be kept up to date with their work.

Deb Thomas let people know that she was available to help people determine if they were eligible for the new NEK Broadband.

There was discussion about the possibility of making property taxes due in two installments each year rather than the October due date. Carroll Macie noted that procedure had been voted on by voters at a previous Town Meeting, but the Select Board at the time opted not to implement this process. Brad Eaton motioned to ask the Select Board to research this option and be prepared to include it on the Town Meeting Warning for 2025. That motion passed.

Voters acknowledged the outstanding job the Auditors, Select Board, and Municipal Plan Committee had done over the past year.

Brad Eaton acknowledged the passing of longtime Fire Chief, Rob Shaw, and asked voters to remember his service to the Town.

Special thanks were given to the members of the volunteer Fire Department for the outstanding job done in fighting the fire a few nights previous.

Deb Thomas reported on the status of the MERP Energy Grant. 7 buildings have been identified as possible recipients of the \$500,000 grant. Inspections of those building has already taken place and revisions are being made to those inspection reports. Grant applications are not available yet for the full \$500,000 and Thomas noted that the process was going to be lengthy. She also noted that Lunenburg had a higher-than-average rate of electrical usage. Residents were encouraged to make their homes as efficient as possible.

Select Board member Briggs announced that the Riverside Cemetery stone cleaning and repair date original scheduled for May had been moved to August due to a conflict with the Vermont Old Cemetery Association. Watch the Town website for further information on this volunteer day at Riverside Cemetery.

Carroll Macie noted that he needed volunteers to assist with removal of some boards around the top of the Old Town Hall and asked those interested to contact Chris Lingley.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:40 am.