

2024 Vernon Town Meeting Minutes

Town Moderator Timothy Arsenault gavelled the meeting into order at 6:35 PM, and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, plus a moment of silence in memory of all those who lost their lives this past year. The meeting is being recorded by Brattleboro Community Television, with American Sign Language interpreters for the deaf.

State Representative Sarah Coffey and State Senator Wendy Harrison both gave a brief summary of their work during the current session, and asked community members to contact them with any questions.

Vernon School Board Chair Walter Breau was introduced, and in turn introduced the school board, recognizing Kari Sparks, who was not seeking re-election.

Kerry Amidon gave a presentation on the school budget, which would be the subject of a March 5 vote. Amidon stated the proposed spending for the next year was up less than one percent, but a variety of factors would bring the overall tax increase to about four percent.

Amidon said Covid related funding has dried up, plus the property value yield and common level of appraisal meant additional taxes were needed to raise the necessary funds. In addition, a law passed by the Vermont Legislature last year meant school districts were no longer protected when changes in the state funding formula occurred. The school board member also reminded homeowners to file their

homestead declaration when they file their Vermont income taxes.

The meeting was briefly recessed to allow the select board to come forward. Articles 4 thru 31 were presented, and both moved, seconded and restated, prior to discussion taking place.

Under Article 4, Dale Gassett, using a point of order, called for a motion to divide the question, and further asked that it be decided by ballot. The motion was seconded and sustained by 7 people. A ballot vote was taken, with the result 54 yes and 86 no.

Thomas Guerino moved that the voters authorize a total general fund expenditure of \$2,293,880 for operating expenses. \$1,843,062 shall be raised by taxes, \$310,000 by estimated income, \$40,818 in ARPA funds and \$100,000 carry over from the 2022-2023 budget. The motion was seconded. Guerino said department heads trimmed their initial budget requests. The year also marked the end of a human resource process which included a new personnel policy and a wage classification process. Guerino applauded the Public Works department for its frugality, said the Recreation department offers extensive programs for the dollars allowed. Residents asked questions about a salary study, and related adjustments. The Recreation budget was questioned, with other community members saying the department was also responsible for the pre school and numerous adult and youth programs.

The article passed on a voice vote.

Article 5, moved by Julie Nevins, called for the appropriation of \$133,456 to be raised by taxes for administration of the Vernon Free Library. The motion was seconded. Questions were asked about the addition of a part time Children's Librarian in the budget. The article passed on a voice vote.

Article 6. Cassie Sailsman Moved that Julie Nevins serve a three year library trustee position through march of 2027. The motion was seconded, and passed on a voice vote.

Article 7. Cassie Sailsman did not have a nominee to serve a three Year Library trustee term until march of 2027. Nicole Deyo volunteered from the floor. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Article 8. Cassie Sailsman did not have a nominee for a two year Library Trustee position to serve through March of 2026. There were no volunteers from the floor, and the current trustees will appoint someone to fill the seat until the next town meeting.

Article 9 To elect a committee to administer the Marsh Fund. Jean Carr moved James Brown and Sandra Harris be appointed as the committee. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Article 10. To Choose a Memorial Day committee. Sandra Harris moved that Peter and Angela Miller be appointed as the committee. The motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Article 11. Shall the voters appropriate \$1,200 to be raised by taxes, for Vernon's historic preservation, educational

promotion and required insurance. The article was moved by Georgia Boyce and it was seconded. Heather Frost said the Historians are a non profit, but they do take donations. The motion was passed on a voice vote.

Article 12. The sum of \$25,000 to be raised by taxes to fund the Professional Services Fund. Chad Baldwin moved the article and it was seconded. Carol Hammond said the fund was used to hire assessment experts and lawyers to gain the maximum allowed amount of tax dollars on large utilities. According to Hammond, when the fund was established, Vernon was the only town willing to fight for the maximum allowed assessed value. The Town has contracted with Sansoucy and Associates of Lancaster New Hampshire since 1999. Since 2020, the Town has spent 325 thousand dollars and received several million dollars in additional tax revenue. The Article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 13. \$10,000 to be raised by taxes, for the emergency repair and replacement fund. Jean Carr moved the article and it was seconded. The article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 14. 125,000 for the Town Road Upgrading fund. Jean Carr moved the article and it was seconded. The article was passed on a voice vote.

Article 15. \$40,000 for the Town Culvert fund. Jean Carr moved the article and it was seconded. The Article was passed on a voice vote.

Article 16. \$4,000 for the Town Parking Lot Maintenance fund. Brandon Bucossi moved

the article and it was seconded. The article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 17. \$5,000 for the Elderly Assistance fund. Marylynn Scherlin moved the article and it was seconded. Questions centered on the funds use, as it was for plowing assistance and other needs that would allow seniors to stay in their homes. The article was passed by a voice vote.

Article 18. \$20,000 for the James Cusick Scholarship Fund. Sandra Harris moved the article and it was seconded. The article was passed on a voice vote.

Article 19 \$529,685 for items approved in the town's Capital Plan, \$491,159.61 to be raised by taxes. Katherine Baldwin moved the article and it was seconded. Baldwin said the Capital Plan committee, which she chaired, spent time with each department to review equipment requests over ten thousand dollars. Questions included the reason for a difference between the money in the fund and the cost of purchases. Thomas Guerino said the difference is the down payment saved versus the predicted future purchase cost. The article was passed on a voice vote.

Article 20. \$15,098.72 for the Windham Solid Waste District Assessment. Thomas Guerino moved the article and it was seconded. The article was passed on a voice vote.

Article 21. \$34,320 for curbside recycling and municipal building refuse , with continuation of the residential Pay as You throw program from July through September. Thomas Guerino moved the article and it was seconded. Sandra Harris

said there would be a special town meeting within the next few months to determine how solid waste would be handled for the balance of the next fiscal year, since the article, if passed, would only cover the first three months of the new budget year. Thomas Guerino said the article was forced by the sale of Triple T to Casella, and the new operator wanted to go to a hands free collection method that would cost the town additional money. The town was able to negotiate a three month extension so the matter could be studied further. Following the end of September, the town could go in a number of different directions for disposal. You must have recycling pick up if you do curbside collection. The article passed on a voice vote.

Article 22. Ending Pay as You Throw and dissolving the Solid waste fund. Thomas Guerino moved to pass over the article the motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Article 23. Building a Transfer Station for \$50,000 and appropriating \$60,000 for part time staff. Thomas Guerino moved to pass over the article. The motion was seconded and approved on a voice vote.

Article 24. \$15,000 for the Emergency Management office. Brandon Bucossi moved the article and it was seconded. Emergency Management director David Emery said the town has been spared the flooding and other problems seen elsewhere in the state. The office is moving from a former private residence owned by Northstar on Governor Hunt Road, into the Town Hall. A new generator has been

installed for the building. The article was passed on a voice vote.

Article 25. \$3,250 for Visiting Nurse and Hospice of Vt and NH. Brandon Bucossi moved the article and it was seconded. Tarina Cozza said the agency no longer serves clients in the area, because of staffing issues. Sandra Harris said the board was unaware they had stopped providing service to Vernon residents. Jason Veaudry said he was not speaking for his employer, but a service referral was met with a similar response. Brad Ellis said the report provided by the organization was deceptive. The article was defeated on a voice vote.

Article 26. \$2,100 for Southeast Community Action. Brandon Bucossi moved the article and it was seconded. The article was defeated on a voice vote.

Article 27. \$6,576 for the Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies for workforce and economic development services. Michael Root moved the article and it was seconded. Don Rosinski questioned whether the organization helped Vernon. Krista Plante said the organization has assisted the friends of Vernon Center In obtaining funding and grant management for the renovation of the Governor Hunt House Community Center. Vernon residents who attend Brattleboro Union High school also are assisted by their Pipelines and Pathways program. The article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 28. \$1,850 for Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont. Michael Root moved the article

and it was seconded. The article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 29. Payment of real estate and personal property taxes to the Town Treasurer in three installments. September 12, 2024; January 9 and May 1 of 2025. Michael Root moved the article and it was seconded. The Article passed on a voice vote.

Article 30. The provision of notice of availability of the town report and auditors report mailed to all registered voters at least 30 days in advance of town meeting as authorized by Vermont title 24 subsection 1682 A2. Michael Root moved the article and it was seconded. The article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 31. Other business. Emergency Management Director David Emery called upon residents to sign up for VT Alert, to get notices on their phone and or computer. vtalert.gov. Sandra Harris applauded departing select board members Thomas Guerino and Michael Root. Arlene Palmiter called on residents to get involved with the Friends of Vernon Center. Norma Manning called for people to get involved with the town Conservation Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Sandra Harris Select board chair

Timothy Arsenault

Town Moderator and Town Clerk.

