

*Minutes of the Vernon, VT
Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, June 4, 2024
DRAFT*

The Moderator, Tim Arsenault welcomed everyone to 2024 Vernon Special Town Meeting. The Moderator asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Moderator briefly went over the rules of the meeting and noted there are two articles on this Warning. The Moderator announced that Curbside Collection will be ending in September with the last collection day being Friday, September 27, 2024.

The Moderator introduced the Selectboard Chair, Sandra Harris. Sandra introduced, Shelly Banford the Town Administrator as well as Selectboard members: Jean Carr, Brandon Bucossi and Jim Pinkerton.

The Moderator thanked the Volunteers. The Moderator stated the only person present that is not a resident is the Town Attorney, Larry Slason.

The Moderator introduced the first article:

Article 1: Shall the voters authorize the construction and operation of a Mobile Transfer Station on town hall property for refuse, recyclables and compost at a total estimated cost of \$167,492 comprised of \$16,450 for supplies, materials, and yard fencing to be paid from the Solid Waste Fund, \$58,200 for trash roll-off rental, part-time attendant and trash disposal fees to be paid from Pay As You Throw revenue, and balance of **\$92,842** for recycling roll-off, and compost container rental, as well as recycling, compost, and municipal solid waste disposal fees **to be raised by taxes**. The Moderator asked if there is a motion to move this article.

Jim Pinkerton motions that the voters authorize the construction and operation of a Mobile Transfer Station on town hall property for refuse, recyclables and compost at a total estimated cost of \$167,492 comprised of \$16,450 for supplies, materials, and yard fencing to be paid from the Solid Waste Fund, \$58,200 for trash roll-off rental, part-time attendant and trash disposal fees to be paid from Pay As You Throw revenue, and balance of \$92,842 for recycling roll-off, and compost container rental, as well as recycling, compost, and municipal solid waste disposal fees to be raised by taxes. Sandra Harris seconds the motion. The Moderator read the article to the audience for clarity. The Moderator asked if anyone would like to speak to this article. Brandon Bucossi stated after the Informational meeting he could see why there was some confusion. Triple T worked well with the Town. Triple T was then purchased by Casella and the when the agreement in place ran out the new proposal was three times of the previous agreement. The Vernon Solid Waste Committee was created and looked at the best options for Vernon. Casella was ruled out due to the cost. The Solid Waste Committee felt a transfer station was a solid option for residents. However, this project would not be completed until next year. After a recent discussion with Solid Waste Committee members, they feel this article should be voted down. There are other good options and in a year if residents don't feel these options are working the transfer station can be considered again.

Mary Ellen Weston asked if the transfer station would increase her taxes. Brandon Bucossi noted the majority of the cost would be covered by user fees. Only recycle would be covered by taxes. Vernon taxes would be better if services were no longer offered. Mary Ellen Weston asked if article #1 is voted down will a transfer station be on the Warning again in the future. Brandon Bucossi stated yes if other options are not working for residents.

George Pond stated residents were led to believe PAYT was a mandate of the State. In the past there were compost containers at the Highway. Where did they go? George stated there is a piece of property on Stebbins Road that could be purchased from Vernon Green that would make a great recycle station. Brandon Bucossi stated there isn't enough time to complete the transfer station before next year. PAYT is not a mandate as there are many towns that offer no services. There are small independent haulers that would be willing to take new customers.

Heather Frost stated she would like residents to take the recommendation of the Solid Waste Committee, she would like to stop debate and call the question. The Moderator asked if there is a second. There was a second from the floor. The vote was 56 residents in favor and 24 were a no vote. The Moderator called for the vote on article #1 and the majority voted no. Article #1 was defeated.

The Moderator read the second article: **Article 2:** If Article 1 is a No vote, shall the voters authorize the town to dissolve the Pay-As-You-Throw Fund and cover any negative expenditure from the Solid Waste Fund? The Moderator asked if there is a motion on the floor. Jean Carr motions to dissolve the Pay-As-You-Throw Fund and cover any negative expenditure from the Solid Waste Fund Sandra Harris seconds the motion. Jean Carr motioned to amend Article #2 to include an appropriation of up to \$18,000.00 for Municipal Solid Waste to be expended from the Solid Waste fund. Sandra Harris seconds the motion. The Moderator read the article again for the audience. Brandon Bucossi stated this is all confusing. Brandon noted there is currently a balance of \$8,000.00 in the PAYT fund and there shouldn't be a deficit.

Don Rosinski asked if the Municipal Solid Waste covers the Highway Garage and the School. Jean Carr stated this covers all municipal buildings: Town Hall, Highway Garage, Fire Station, Recreation Center and the School. Don noted there is only a small percentage of residents using PAYT and it has always been a convenience. Don stated there are a lot of great Solid Waste options available to residents. We should take care of the Municipal Solid Waste and get out of the Solid Waste business.

Sandy Morrison stated she is confused about the money and asked if the funds for the transfer station can be set aside for a transfer station in the future. Brandon Bucossi stated these funds are separate. The Town Treasurer, Cindy Turnley was asked for the current balances. Cindy reported: PAYT currently has a balance of \$8,653.46 and the Solid Waste Fund balance is \$113,542.43. Cindy noted there will still be bills coming in to cover the last quarter and the Windham Solid Waste Management District assessment.

Munson Hicks stated residents may be interested in having funds set aside for a future transfer station. Brandon Bucossi stated he agrees 100% and there will be a significant amount left for this purpose. Brandon informed the audience small haulers are willing to take on new customers and have been very mindful of being neutral through this process.

Norma Manning asked if it is legal to set aside these funds for a transfer station. Brandon Bucossi stated these funds already exist and were created for the purpose of exploring the option of a transfer station.

George Pond stated if residents decide to use private haulers Casella will still get paid since they own all the tipping stations in the area. Casella doesn't like door to door pick up and raised the cost of services so residents would go to dumpsters.

Eleanor Thomas stated it was her understanding that the Municipal Solid Waste was voted on at Town Meeting and would like to know why it was not for the full year. Brandon Bucossi stated it was not for the full year as the cost was rolled into article #1 with the transfer station.

G. Corcoran stated when PAYT was implemented the majority of the town was not in agreement. Greg feels a transfer station will be more expensive.

Mary Ann Weston asked what the WSWMD assessment covers. WSWMD Director, Bob Spencer stated that towns in the district are assessed an annual assessment based on population for membership and use of solid waste services provided. Mary Ann stated she uses the PAYT program and has been very happy with it and if residents will save on taxes. Brandon Bucossi stated yes, because recycling will no longer be funded.

Jean Carr informed residents that Vernon has been paying for recycling services since it's mandated by the state for towns providing curbside trash collection. Jean asked the Treasurer, Cindy Turnley what the cost of recycling is. Cindy stated recycling is currently at a cost of \$5,179.16 per month. Brandon Bucossi stated 80% of residents use the recycling services so it made sense to pay for this service. Brandon informed residents that small haulers offering curbside trash collection also offer recycling.

Heather Frost would like to call the question. The Moderator clarified the article as amended. Article #2 as amended: Shall the Town dissolve the Pay-As-You-Throw fund covering any negative expenditure from the Solid Waste Fund and appropriate up to \$18,000.00 for Municipal Solid Waste to be expended from the Solid Waste fund? The Moderator called for a vote on the amended article. Article #2 as amended passed with a yes vote from the majority of the audience.

The moderator adjourned the meeting at 7:16 PM.