

Dover Select Board  
Pre-Town Meeting Minutes  
Dover Town Hall  
February 26, 2019

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***THESE MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE DOVER SELECT BOARD***

Select Board members present: Josh Cohen, Victoria Capitani, Sarah Shippee, Joe Mahon, Dan Baliotti  
School Board members present: Rich Werner, Jolene Mahon, Johnny Cleanthes  
School Board members absent: Laura Sibilila, Kerry McDonald-Cady  
Also present: Office Manager, Jeannette Eckert

Public: Laurie Newton, Randy Johnson, Steve Neratko, Marc Schaubert, Lauren Harkawik, Tamara Allen, Linda Sherman, Stephanie Greene, Marshall Brooks, Regina Werner, Andy McLean, Marco Tallini, Michael Garber, Bob Holland

Moderator Rich Werner called the meeting to order at 6pm

I. Review Town Meeting Warning

ARTICLE 1: To choose all Dover town officers and Dover school district officers and Unified

School District officers for the following positions required by law to be elected at the annual meeting:

Auditor 3-year term (Robert McIntyre)

First Constable 1-year term (none running)

Grand Juror 1-year term (Andy McLean)

Library Trustee 5-year term (Dianne Guminak)

Library Trustee 5-year term (3 years remaining) (Christine Kelly)

Moderator - School 1-year term (Sarah Shippee)

Moderator - Town 1-year term (Rich Werner)

School Director 3-year term (Laura Sibilila)

School Director 2-year term (Kerry McDonald-Cady)

Select Board Member 3-year term (Joe Mahon)

Select Board Member 2-year term (Victoria Capitani)

Town Agent 1-year term (Linda Holland)

Town Clerk 3-year term (Andy McLean)

Town Treasurer 3-year term (Marco Tallini)

Trustee of Public Funds 1-year term (Marco Tallini)

Town meeting is next Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. Polls open from 10am to 7pm. The above offices are voted on by Australian ballot. There are no contested races for the above positions.

**TOWN MEETING**

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters accept the annual report of the auditors and other town officers?

- The Town Report contains various reports pertaining to the Town functions/finances

ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters compensate town officers as follows: Town Clerk \$55,731.49 annual salary, Town Treasurer \$5,000 annual stipend, Select Board Chairman \$2,500 annual stipend, Select Board members \$2,000 annual stipend, and Town Auditors \$17.95/hr., all others – chairmen Vermont minimum wage plus \$1.50/hr., members Vermont minimum wage, and mileage based on the Federal reimbursement rate for the month in which the mileage occurred?

- Treasurer's stipend? Position was broken up into two parts: treasurer receives a stipend and financial officer is a salaried position

ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditure for operational expenses of \$2,286,519.16 or the coming year?

- Up 2% over last year; raising funding for health insurance at 75% rather than at 100% because to date it has never been used in full by employees
- Last year it was down 1%

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditure for operational expenses of \$1,551,686.11 or the coming year?

- Up 11% over last year; hired an Asst Road Commissioner who is training to take Bob Holland's position when he retires; wages are up; \$35,000 culvert to replace—State will fund \$251,000

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$650,000.00 for the Capital Paving Fund?

- Same amount as in past several years
- Considered new paving on Holland Rd but was shot down by residents; considering Buckboard instead
- Roads being paved this year are North St, Upper Handle, Lower Highlands, Jockey Hollow
- Who determines what roads remain dirt and what roads get paved? Maintain the paved roads that we have, don't usually go after new paving; do not aggressively pave; courtesy to residents who want country roads to remain but if Hwy Dept determines issues, then paving is done

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$250,000.00 for the Capital Equipment Fund?

- Same amount raised as last year and in many previous years

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$80,000.00 for the Capital Building Improvement Fund?

- No comments or questions

ARTICLE 9: Shall the voters exempt the property of the East Dover Volunteer Fire Co., Inc. from property taxes for five years in accordance with V.S.A. Title 32 Se. 3840?

- This is voted on every five years; straight forward deal, most towns have regular and voted exemptions; this has been an ongoing article
- West Dover Fire is covered under the municipality

ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$15,000.00 for Support and Services at Home (SASH) to provide services to the residents the Town?

- Last year was the first year it was funded; a SASH representative is encouraged to be present at Town Meeting with an update of what the appropriation was spent on

ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$3,372.00 for Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) activities?

- Again, traditionally voted on at Town Meeting; a representative is encouraged to attend to provide update
- Steve Neratko has helped work through their projects and on to the eyes of those who can fund them; going through a new process of identifying projects
- Funding amount is based on per capita

ARTICLE 12: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$5,381.09 for MHCA Dover Cinema (Memorial Hall Center for the Arts, Inc.)?

- Number of the appropriation is taken from the last tax bill for the movie theatre
- Dan Fascilla usually shows up at Town Meeting to offer updated information
- Marc Schauber inquiries about whether a plan has been formulated—ask Dan at Town Meeting about this
- Linda Sherman compares Dover Cinema to Weston Playhouse & how amazing it is, but could it happen in West Dover? Community Art Center to benefit the school, theatre, music, arts programs but there has never been a plan in place; there is a lot of money in this town; it should be used; Dan should come up with a plan before any funds given
- Steve has offered assistance and there are grants available
- Name change is key to moving forward but that still has not happened
- Taxes are paid on the building, but it is a non-profit business
- There is a board presently—perhaps new members are needed
- Once he establishes a community center, he can apply for exemption
- Concerts in Wilmington are not run by Dan; two separate entities
- Can offer suggestions but can't make him do anything
- Consider asking for reports from those who seek an appropriation

ARTICLE 13: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$20,000.00 for Deerfield Valley Rescue Inc.?

- Another first-time renewal; again, requesting feedback at Town meeting
- Money is for operations, not the building

ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town of Dover authorize the Dover Select Board as provided in 24 V.S.A. 2741 to enter into contracts with those who are, or intend to become, industrial or commercial property owners for the purpose of fixing and/or maintaining the valuation in the grand list, the rate or rates of tax applicable, the amount which shall be paid, the tax applicable at a percentage of the annual municipal tax for a period not to exceed ten years?

- Laurie Newton was one of a group who got a petition together on this topic. She turns it over to Steve because she feels it to be an Econ. Dev. issue
- Steve is generally in favor of Tax Stabilization policies; many towns have one including Wilmington; goal is to improve commercial or industrial building in town
- Select board would determine the policy & enter into contract with businesses or corporation to graduate the tax for up to 10 years; incentive to get development in town
- Laurie: State allows this to be done; only applicable to municipal property tax, not education tax
  - Example: Someone wants to purchase the Silo or Central Appliance and fix it up; still pays tax on the current value of the property, no loss of tax revenue; pays extra for higher appraised amount over time for up to 10 years; allows prospective business owners to get back on their feet and not pay incremental value; town does not lose any money for up to 10 years; at end of 10 years taxed at full value 100%; Selectboard

would come up with a policy to define the increments; it is an economic development tool

- Stephanie Greene: So, is this basically empowering the SB to make this determination instead of voting from the floor?
- Marshall Brooks: So, currently one can't come before the SB and enter into a negotiation for reduced taxes?
  - Yes and no, municipal side—no. But on Economic Dev. side there are grants that could be offered
- Linda Sherman: Assessor could feasibly reduce the value for a period of time and property could be inspected on a yearly basis until it is at 100%; this has occurred in the past
- Andy McLean: No one has the power to lower assessment below 100% of the value; SB has no power to change that, grants are possible, yes. Everyone is taxed at 100%. This article would allow this change to take place
- Marc Schaubert: Does this automatically apply to any business or do they come before the Board to make a decision?
  - It would be up to the Board
- Laurie: All towns that have this policy have an application procedure; some are stricter than others
- Tamara Allen: Dots burned; could it fit under this article should the SB authorize it? Allow during construction phase?
  - Josh: Standards should be objective and set in open meeting; Devil is in the details; apply to expansion or improvement
- Linda Sherman: How many other towns who have policies have used it? I heard that Wilmington has only had one
- Steve: They are not used that often; but it is there and one more incentive we can offer; fact that we are offering something is better; happy that funds are available; try to write a policy so that it would be used more often
- Vicki: Policy is a guideline; any Board could choose to follow or not follow the guidelines and that is disconcerting; Andy also put together an amendment that would allow voters to make the decision every time it came up; any Board could not make a special arrangement for one business over another; whole town can weigh in on it; feel more comfortable with that scenario; more inclined to support it by making it a Town meeting vote by Australian ballot
- Andy: Statute provides a time limit of 10 years, but SB can create the timing based on each application
- Stephanie Greene: Have you compared policies to other towns besides Wilmington?
- Steve: Pretty similar because they are basic; Bennington's is quite extensive; believe that it should go before the voters—can't we make that our policy?
  - Select board & voters have very specific powers; Policy could include a non-binding referendum
- Marshall: Article as it is written allows the Select board to enter into contracts; nothing mentioned about committees or guidelines
- Rich: Is a policy required?
- Andy: No requirement that SB adopt a policy, but a responsible SB would adopt one; Statute gives a lot of power to the SB if voted that way; know of no town where this was ever done; SB needs to create a policy and apply it fairly
- Rich: Could it be part of an amendment? Once voted on could only be removed by petition at the next Town meeting; two amendments are allowed for every article which are germane to that article
- Andy McLean composed an amendment to Article 14: when Laurie Newton explained the article, I thought it was a good idea and I still do; a good tool to have in our tool box; concerns

can be addressed with an amendment; Statute gives power to SB to enter into contracts with businesses for up to 10 years in graduated circumstances; once signed it cannot take it back for 10 years. Or power can be given to negotiate contracts and these contracts would then need to be ratified by the voters at a special or regular town meeting

- Mt Snow has projects that are bigger than Dots, Silo or Ironstone; having been 12 years as town clerk and zoning before that...there are unique issues with a small town with one big employer; may be a fantastic employer doing a fantastic job but runs the risk of creating a conflict of interest; concerns with how we adopt and how much power is given to the SB; potential for COI is great; and to provide for the voters who give up equality in the tax rate a way for them to feel comfortable; Dover is blessed with good government and trustworthy board members; if voters have the ability to ratify any decision by the SB, that takes away my concerns; not against Mt Snow benefiting from this process; concerns are strictly *messing with the grand list and conflict of interest*—an amendment would take care of that
- Rich Werner read the amendment into the record
- Josh Cohen: The differences are #1: SB *negotiates* contracts in open meeting and then #2 has a vote by the town which essentially kills the conflict of interest. That is what the amendment will do. We negotiate and you approve
- Vicki suggests Australian ballot should be added to amendment
- Rich Werner: this can be very confusing; handouts on the amendment would be helpful
- Marc Schaubert: Are there towns that you looked at that require this vote? Have there been any negative effects as a result? What is the time frame to getting the vote to the people?
- Steve: Have not seen any town vote on this. For the most part there is an application and the SB approves it; this would be something a little different but no reason to not do it
- Andy: A special meeting needs to be warned 30 to 45 days prior to the meeting; most concerns are with a big project from a big developer—SB will take their time on this, the vote will be clunky, a lot of details to work through; special meeting will not add a lot of time to the negotiation process
- Josh Cohen: This was discussed at last board meeting so there is some framework on this. Special meeting gets the notice that the public needs; SB is part of the public as voters
- Andy: Expect a lot of coverage from the press on a big project; much less excitement on a smaller project; it will be the voter's choice to turn out or not; SB votes as well; opportunity to approve this; the voters, taxpayers are accountable
- Josh: The size of the project is immaterial
- Laurie Newton: In the amendment would the SB still come up with a policy and an application?  
Josh: If amendment goes through it is more likely to be a rigorous policy & application
- Marco: Does the public have the ability to help the board formulate the policy?
- Josh: Public has the ability to shape it by coming to meetings
- Andy: Public can be involved as much or as little as the board deems necessary, but it would not be ratified by the people
- Rich Werner: There is nothing in the article about a policy or procedure. Can that be added to the amendment? Next SB could change that policy; adding an extra precaution (Andy will look into this)
- Josh: No policy is a quick way to have a short term on the Board
- Vicki: Would hope the guidelines would be followed
- Andy: Australian ballot? Might be a good idea but will look into it; generally speaking public can vote to vote by Australian ballot; seven people can request it; paper ballot is when the vote is from the floor; anonymous but can have discussion; pros and cons to it
  - 10-year period is limited by Statute; unclear if it can be altered; sunset of 10 years
  - Power under this Statute is pretty broad; amendment allows them to tailor situations; wonderful tool if used properly

- Commercial residential property could fall under this category if developed for profit; once sold to the public, I would say no
- What about a home business that wants to put an addition on to the home?
- The Board is going to be very transparent and open about developing the policy, if this is adopted
- Anyone can look at various town websites on tax stabilization policies
- There has been very good discussion on this and hopefully that will continue at Town meeting

ARTICLE 15: Shall the voters authorize the Selectmen to apply any surplus from the current fiscal year to reduce taxes in the next fiscal year?

- Surplus is voted on prior to setting the town tax rate; essentially buying down the rate by applying the surplus

ARTICLE 16: Shall the voters authorize the Selectmen to sell properties, which the Town has acquired by gift or through tax sales?

- Last two tax sales, the town did not buy any property, but it has in the past
- Amount of delinquent taxes has gone down considerably

ARTICLE 17: Shall the voters authorize the Selectmen to set the tax rate sufficient to cover the approved expenses of the Town of Dover and the Town of Dover Highway for taxes due on September 15, 2019 and February 15, 2020?

- If date falls on a holiday, automatically goes to the next business day

ARTICLE 18: Shall the voters authorize the Selectmen to borrow money in anticipation of taxes?

- Have not had to do this; Dover is very fortunate

### **SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Rich Werner turns the school portion over to School Moderator Sarah Shippee

ARTICLE 19: To discuss any items that the voters would like to discuss, and to conduct any other business that may legally come before the voters.

- RVUSD meeting is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in February at 7pm; meeting place alternates every year between Dover and Wardsboro; budget was voted on at that meeting which was well attended; booklet was mailed out to every household with registered voters
- There are some items on the ballot that will be voted on at Town Meeting; 4 articles on the ballot for each town: one school director position for each town; method of voting; changing the method of voting and the budget
- Any other business can be brought up if the Moderator so deems although the floor can out vote the Moderator
- Same school choice; Two Auditors were voted in at the meeting; meetings are all videotaped

Meeting was adjourned at 7:54pm

Respectfully submitted by Jeannette Eckert  
Select Board Administrator

Public notices of these minutes have been posted at the following locations:  
Dover Town Clerk's Bulletin Board, Dover Town Meeting Bulletin Board, Dover School  
Dover Free Library, East Dover Post Office, Town of Dover Website: [www.doververmont.com](http://www.doververmont.com)