

***Town of Stratford
Town Meeting
10 March 2020***

The business meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM on March 10, 2020 by Moderator Jamie Sayen. There were approximately 50 voters in attendance. Moderator Sayen went over the common sense guidelines of the meeting.

*Article 1 will be printed on official ballots. The polls are open from 10 am to 7 pm.

***Article 1:** To choose by non-partisan ballot the following Officers: 1 Selectman (1 year); 1 Selectman (3 years); 1 Town Clerk & Tax Collector (3 years); 1 Cemetery Trustee (3 years); 1 Cemetery Trustee (2 years); 1 Library Trustee (3 years); 1 Town Auditor (1 year); 1 Trustee of Trust Funds (3 years); 1 Supervisor of the Checklist (6 years); 1 Town Moderator (2 years).

Ballot vote.

Moderator Sayen explained that due to a typing error, the term for Supervisor of the Checklist was incorrectly listed. It should be 6 years, not three. This is required by the statues and is also reflected on the ballot.

Motion made to amend article to say “1 Supervisor of the Checklist (6 years)”: Cindy Juergens

Seconded by: Claire Martineau

Proposed amendment to Article 1 passed by voice vote.

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$780,547 for the operating budget. This article does not include the cost of any other warrant article.

Motion made to accept article as read: Clayton Macdonald

Seconded by: Charlie Goulet

No discussion.

Article 2 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$5,077 to be added to the previously established Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund, with the full amount to come from the unassigned fund balance. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Harry Juergens

Seconded by: Clayton Macdonald

No discussion.

Article 3 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$25,000 to be added to the previously established Highway and Bridges Capital Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Harry Juergens

Seconded by: Charlie Goulet

No discussion.

Article 4 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to be added to the previously established Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Charlie Goulet

Seconded by: Josiah Barnes

No discussion.

Article 5 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$3,000 to be added to the previously established Recycling Capital Reserve Fund, with the full amount to come from the unassigned fund balance. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Charlie Goulet

Seconded by: Harry Juergens

No discussion.

Article 6 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$1,000 to be added to the previously established 250th Celebration Expendable Trust Fund for the purpose of funding the 250th anniversary celebration to be held in 2023. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Wendy McMann

Seconded by: Harry Juergens

Discussion: Members of the 250th Anniversary Planning Committee invited the public to be more engaged and active in the planning of the celebrations.

Article 7 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$16,116 to be added to the previously established Government Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The Funds represent the amount of monies collected from the sale of tax deeded properties sold in 2019. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Charlie Goulet

Seconded by: Harry Juergens

Discussion: The question was raised from the floor to clarify: does the Town have to raise and appropriate those monies, i.e. do they get added to the tax burden? Select Board member Clayton Macdonald explained the funds are already at hand and do not need to be appropriated, this article is to authorize the transfer of these monies from the general fund to the fund in

question. Chuck Stinson asked for a change in the article's language to better reflect the article's purpose and to clarify the money's origin.

Clayton Macdonald proposed the following amendment:

"To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$16,116 to be added to the previously established Government Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The Funds represent the amount of monies collected from the sale of tax deeded properties sold in 2019, **with full amount to come from the unassigned fund balance**" (added language in bold).

Amended seconded by: Harry Juergens

Voters passed the Amendment.

The amended Article 8 passed by voice vote.

Article 9: To see if the Town will change the purpose of the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund to the Municipal Solar Capital Reserve Fund. Further, to name the Board of Selectmen as agents. (2/3 vote required).

Motion made to accept article as read: Clayton Macdonald

Seconded by: Charlie Goulet

Discussion: Select board member Clayton Macdonald explained the article's purpose. After the last Police Department public hearing there seemed to be no further need for a PD and thus no need to replace the police cruiser. The conclusion was to discontinue the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund and instead transfer those funds to a new Municipal Solar Capital Reserve Fund. Given the Town's electricity bill, around \$24,000 annually, it would be worthwhile to set up a municipal solar array to offset those costs. The exploration of this idea is yet in its early stages, but by passing this article the Town's residents would signal serious interest in the matter and at the same time establish seed money that can be used to explore possible grant options. Discussion touched on the question of whether the town could recoup its investment in solar panels, required maintenance costs, and clarifying the town's electrical needs (mostly for water and sewer pumps, less for lighting). Select Board member Clayton Macdonald reported that the Town is currently in the process of replacing all the lights in the town hall and probably the fire station with LED fixtures, which will be more energy efficient and sustainable. Finally, the argument was made that from a climate change perspective, a municipal solar power array sets a good example and should be a "no-brainer". Discussion also revolved around the potential sale of the police cruiser, and a call from the Fire Department that the space the cruiser now occupies in the town garage could be put to better, more urgent use (fire truck or rescue vehicle) to cut down on the Fire Department's response time.

Article 9 passed as read by show of hands: 48 YES / 1 NO / 1 abstained.

Article 10: To see if the town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 79-E which authorizes the Selectmen to provide community revitalization tax incentives for property owners who intend to substantially rehabilitate a qualifying structure, as defined in the statute.

Motion made to accept article as read: Sam Cavazos

Seconded by: Cindy Juergens

Discussion: The question was raised whether these tax incentives would also include residential building rehabilitation. Select Board member Clayton Macdonald explained the general intent of RSA 79-E, with the main application meant for buildings that serve a “public benefit”. The RSA does not clearly define what constitutes a “public benefit” is but it was implied that buildings should include some form of public space. The article only authorizes the Select Board to adopt the RSA – once that is approved and in place, a public hearing would likely be in order to address the exact parameters of how it would be applied in Stratford. It was noted that the ongoing restoration of the Library Hall building in Stratford Hollow was the trigger for this article and that the building clearly would be qualified.

Additional discussion included questions regarding the exact amount and duration of the tax incentive and possible limits of how many property owners can apply in a given tax year.

Article 10 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$250 for the Cohos Historical Society in showing support of the town in helping to match the current LCHIP Grant for the restoration of the Marion Blodgett Museum.

Motion made to accept article as read: Wayne Hall

Seconded by: Jenny Caron

Discussion: Jenny Caron proposed an amendment to raise the amount from \$250 to \$1000.

Vicki Delalla seconded. **The proposed amended article reads as follows:**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$1000** for the Cohos Historical Society in showing support of the town in helping to match the current LCHIP Grant for the restoration of the Marion Blodgett Museum. (changed language in bold).

Voters passed the amendment.

Article 11 passed as amended by voice vote.

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to discontinue the elected Auditor position. (Board Recommends)

Motion made to accept article as read: Clayton Macdonald

Seconded by: Charlie Goulet

Discussion: Select Board member Clayton Macdonald explained the Town’s auditor position has not been filled by election for quite some time. Being a small municipality, different rules apply and the Town has used a professional, 3rd party auditing service to do this work for many years. Hence, no need to continue with the elected position.

Article 12 passed as read by voice vote.

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$6,450 in donations to the following groups: \$150, North Country Home Health & Hospice; \$150, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital; \$150, Northern Human Services; \$1,600, Tri-County CAP (fuel assistance); \$2,900, Tri-County CAP Senior Meals (meals on wheels); \$150, Tri-County CAP North Country Transit (bus service); \$150, Colebrook Food Pantry; \$150, Helping Hands; \$150, Service Link; \$150, Backpack

Program; \$150, CASA; \$150, Tri-County CAP Homeless; \$150, NH Veterans; \$150, The Rec Center; \$150, Stratford Old Home Day, Inc.

Motion made to accept article as read: Charlie Goulet

Seconded by: Sam Cavazos

Discussion: Wayne Hall proposed an amendment to raise the money for the Backpack Program from \$150 to \$500. Laurie Bacon seconded.

The proposed amended article reads as follows:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$6,800** in donations to the following groups: \$150, North Country Home Health & Hospice; \$150, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital; \$150, Northern Human Services; \$1,600, Tri-County CAP (fuel assistance); \$2,900, Tri-County CAP Senior Meals (meals on wheels); \$150, Tri-County CAP North Country Transit (bus service); \$150, Colebrook Food Pantry; \$150, Helping Hands; \$150, Service Link; **\$500, Backpack Program**; \$150, CASA; \$150, Tri-County CAP Homeless; \$150, NH Veterans; \$150, The Rec Center; \$150, Stratford Old Home Day, Inc. (changed language in bold).

Voters passed the amendment.

Article 13 passed as amended by voice vote.

Article 14: To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting and to hear reports from any agents or committees heretofore chosen.

Motion made to accept article as read: Wayne Hall

Seconded by: Claire Martineau

Discussion: Residents brought forth a number of issues, including the following:

- A report by the Chair of the Planning Board, Rachel O'Meara, asking residents for their input in the Town's new Masterplan by completing the survey and leaving comments on a map currently on public display in the Town Hall;
- the state of the Town's Police Department and the potential sale of the Town's police cruiser and police 4-wheeler (option: turn 4-wheeler over to Fire Department for use as rescue vehicle);
- a call for moving the Town Meeting to the evening, combining it with the School Meeting, in order to accommodate working residents;
- renewed discussion about the future use of the Town Garage (Fire Dept. would like to use one bay for equipment and fire truck). Select Board noted they are working on the issue of rehabilitating the Town Garage. However, the building's foundation needs to be stabilized before any necessary upgrades can take place. The Select Board made it known there was no disagreement with the Fire Department's wish to utilize part of the building. An engineering company has been hired to evaluate the building's structure and make suggestions for rehabilitation. No results to share yet. Concern was voiced about the length of time it takes to make part of the building available to the Fire Dept.;
- Fire Chief Chuck Stinson urged residents that more volunteers were needed for the Fire Department, especially those that live in town, as many of the current volunteers live outside of Stratford and have long commutes;
- the status of the library deck which has been in disrepair for several years (Town has asked for bids to replace and repair decking);

- the current status of the Town's road maintenance (currently no designated Road Agent, but Mike Lynch is continuing to plow and John Nugent is willing to do summer maintenance, which seems to work out for now).

Call to residents to please bring all other concerns before the Select Board at any upcoming board meeting.

Motion to adjourn made by: Clayton Macdonald

Seconded by: Claire Martineau

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously by voice vote.

The business meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM by Moderator Jamie Sayen on 3/10/2020.

Respectfully submitted



Katrin Kerner
Stratford Town Clerk

March 26, 2020