

TOWN OF WHEELOCK ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MARCH 3, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Moderator Peter Miller. Dr. Miller led the gathering in the pledge of allegiance. He announced that the meeting would be held in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE 1: To elect a moderator for the ensuing year.

The nomination was made for Peter Miller to serve as moderator for one year by Lorraine Poulin.

The motion was made by Kathy Schmidt, seconded by Dennis Sawyer for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Peter Miller; so voted.

Announcements

Jason DiGiulio stated that the Selectboard had been contacted by the Department of Justice regarding the town hall being out of compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. Dr. DiGiulio stated that the Board is currently negotiating with the Department of Justice on plans to address the violations. Some of the violations have already been corrected. The Selectboard wanted to make it very clear that the idea that the town hall was 'grandfathered' and did not have to comply with ADA regulations was false. The Selectboard must reach an agreement or the town will face penalties.

Lorraine Poulin requested that the order of the day be changed and Article 4 be addressed before Articles 2 and Article 3. So voted by voice vote.

The motion was made by Carol Rossi seconded by Kathy Schmidt to interrupt the meeting to hear from State Representative Vicki Strong. So voted.

Vicki introduced herself as our State Representative for the past 10 years. She thanked local officials for their efforts. She explained she ran for office and continues to serve in recognition of her son who died in Iraq. Vicki stated that she has served on the health care

committee, the judiciary committee, the military affairs committee and is currently on the agriculture committee. Vermont dairy farmers are in distress. There are only half as many dairy farms in Vermont today as there were 10 years ago. Vicki shared that Vermont is rated as the cleanest state and the most forested state. She is working to make sure we understand the value of our forests and work to keep them. Representative Strong advocated for communities to band together as districts to bring about the extension of broadband services to rural communities. She explained that she voted no on Bill S54 related to the legalization of marijuana because she felt it was a poorly written bill and not appropriate at this time. She voted 'no' on the Act 250 amendment bill because she believed it did not make the process better.

ARTICLE 4. To elect all Town Officers required by law.

CLERK: Vanessa Seguin was nominated for the position of town clerk for a three year term by Carol Rossi. The motion was made by Kathy Schmidt, seconded by Dennis Sawyer for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Vanessa Seguin for town clerk; so voted.

TREASURER: Vanessa Seguin was nominated for the position of town treasurer for a three year term by Carol Rossi, seconded by Dennis Sawyer. The motion was made by Dennis Sawyer, seconded by Kathy Schmidt, for the nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Vanessa Seguin for town treasurer; so voted.

SELECTBOARD: Bobbi Jo Norcross was nominated by Dennis Sawyer for the position of selectboard member for a three year term. The motion was made by Kathy Schmidt, seconded by Richard Norcross, for the nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Bobbi Jo Norcross for selectboard; so voted.

Dennis Sawyer was thanked for his years of service to the town. As his final act as a member of the Board, he turned in the agreements signed by the landowners impacted by the proposed detour on the South Wheelock Road. The detour will be part of the Stannard Mountain Road Bridge Replacement Project.

LISTER: Jim Blackbird was nominated for the position of lister for a three year term by Carol Rossi. The motion was made by Carol Rossi, seconded by Dennis Sawyer, for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Jim Blackbird for the position of lister; so voted.

AUDITOR: Barbara Miller was nominated for the position of auditor for a three year term by Dennis Sawyer. The motion was made by Kim Crady-Smith, seconded by Dennis Sawyer, for then nominations to cease and the clerk to cast on ballot for Barbara Miller for auditor; so voted.

DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR: Emily Purdy was nominated for delinquent tax collector for a one year term by Kim Crady-Smith. The motion was made by Carol Rossi, seconded by Kathy Schmidt, for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Emily Purdy for delinquent tax collector; so voted.

FIRST CONSTABLE: Charles Lacaillade was nominated for the position of first constable for a one year term by Lorraine Poulin. The motion was made by Dennis Sawyer, seconded by Kathy Schmidt, for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Charles Lacaillade for first constable; so voted.

SECOND CONSTABLE: Atti Seguin was nominated for the position of second constable for a one year term by Kathy Schmidt. The motion was made by Kathy Schmidt, seconded by Dennis Sawyer, for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Atti Seguin for second constable; so voted.

GRAND JURY: Martin Holladay was nominated for the position of grand juror by Jill Faulkner. The motion was made by Kathy Schmidt, seconded by Dennis Sawyer, for nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for Martin Holladay for grand juror; so voted.

TOWN AGENT to CONVEY REAL ESTATE: The town clerk was nominated for the position of agent to convey real estate for a one year term by Carol Rossi. Dennis Sawyer made the motion, seconded by Peter Emerson, that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for the town clerk as the agent to convey real estate; so voted.

TOWN AGENT TO PROSECUTE: The Selectboard was nominated as the town agent to prosecute by Dennis Sawyer. The motion was made by Dennis Sawyer, seconded by Kathy Schmidt, for the nominations to cease and the clerk to cast one ballot for the selectboard as the town agent to prosecute; so voted.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters approve expenditures in the amount of \$135,757 for the General Fund to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town for the ensuing year?

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Kathy Schmidt, to approve expenditures in the amount of \$135,757 for the General Fund to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town for the ensuing year; so voted. There was no discussion.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters approve expenditures in the amount of \$340,808 for the maintenance of its highways, including summer roads, winter roads and State Aid Resurfacing?

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Peter Emerson, to approve expenditures in the amount of \$340,808 for the maintenance of its highways, including summer roads, winter roads and State Aid Resurfacing.

The road crew was thanked for their service to the town.

The board addressed questions about the Stannard Mountain Road bridge project, the funds spent on repairs to equipment and staffing issues. Suggestions made by audience members included looking into the purchase of a trailer for the chloride tank, including more detail in the report about equipment repairs and including long term detail in the report about reserve account balances.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock appropriate the sum of \$7,000 to be added to the \$65,808 already in the Reserve Fund under the control and direction of the Selectboard for bridge repair, replacement and/or major road repair?

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner, seconded by Kristopher DiGiulio, to appropriate the sum of \$7,000 to be added to the \$65,808 already in the Reserve Fund under the control and direction of the Selectboard for bridge repair, replacement and/or major road repair; so voted.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock appropriate the sum of \$37,000 to be added to the \$48,301 already in the Road Equipment Replacement Fund to be used for the purchase of new equipment?

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner, seconded by Carol Rossi, to appropriate the sum of \$37,000 to be added to the \$48,301 already in the Road Equipment Replacement Fund to be used for the purchase of new equipment; so voted.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters of the town of Wheelock appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to the Town Hall Project Reserve Fund to be used for major repair and rehabilitation work on the Wheelock Town Hall and reduction of debt for those expenses?

The motion was made by Atti Seguin, seconded by Brenda Smith, to appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to the Town Hall Project Reserve Fund to be used for major repair and rehabilitation work on the Wheelock Town Hall and reduction of debt for those expenses.

The Selectboard shared information about the Community Forums that were recently held and the creation of two new committees, one focused on communication and one focused on facilities. There was discussion of the projected cost of facility projects and the need to increase the amount going into the reserve.

The motion was made by Dennis Sawyer, seconded by Carol Rossi, to call the question; so voted.

The motion passed by voice vote with a few nos.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters of the town of Wheelock appropriate the sum of \$35,000 to the Town Garage Fund to be added to the \$48,368 already there to be used for addressing the needs for a Town Garage?

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Kim Crady-Smith, to appropriate the sum of \$35,000 to the Town Garage Fund to be added to the \$48,368 already there to be used for addressing the needs for a Town Garage; so voted.

There was discussion of the potential cost of meeting the need for a new town garage.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock appropriate the sum of \$34,868.73 for the operating expenses of Lyndon Rescue, Inc?

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner, seconded by Peter Emerson to appropriate the sum of \$34,868.73 for the operating expenses of Lyndon Rescue, Inc; so voted.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town of Wheelock appropriate the sum of \$30,500 for the operating expenses and equipment replacement fund of the Sheffield/Wheelock Fire Department?

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Kristopher DiGiulio, to appropriate the sum of \$30,500 for the operating expenses and equipment replacement fund of the Sheffield/Wheelock Fire Department.

The volunteers of the Sheffield/Wheelock Fire Department received a round of applause for their service. Chief Shane Lanpher spoke about fire department equipment and grant initiatives. Shane encouraged all citizens to consider joining the department.

The motion passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock vote that taxpayers pay real estate taxes to the Treasurer on or before the first Friday of November annually with U S Postal Service postmarks accepted and with delinquent taxes having interest charges of one percent (1%) per month and with a (7%) penalty charged against them from the due date?

The motion was made by Kim Crady-Smith, seconded by Kristopher DiGiulio, to taxpayers pay real estate taxes to the Treasurer on or before the first Friday of November annually with U S Postal Service postmarks accepted and with delinquent taxes having interest charges of one percent (1%) per month and with a (7%) penalty charged against them from the due date; so voted.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the voters appropriate \$29,645 for the Town's share of Transfer Station expenses?

The motion was made by Brenda Smith, seconded by Kathy Schmidt, that the voters appropriate \$29,645 for the Town's share of Transfer Station expenses; so voted.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town raise \$4,607 to support the following organizations?

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| 1) Community Restorative Justice Center | \$250 |
| 2) Caledonia Home Health and Hospice | \$300 |
| 3) Darling Inn Senior Meal Site | \$300 |
| 4) HOPE | \$500 |
| 5) NEK Council on Aging | \$300 |
| 6) Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc | \$1622 |
| 7) Northeast Kingdom Youth Services | \$250 |
| 8) Northeast Kingdom Learning Services | \$100 |
| 9) Rural Community Transportation | \$300 |
| 10) Umbrella | \$600 |
| 11) Vermont Center for Independent Living | \$85 |

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Brenda Smith, the the Town raise \$4,607 to support the listed organizations; so voted.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town appropriate \$250 to the Kingdom Animal Shelter, an all volunteer run animal rescue?

The motion was made by David Stahler, Jr., seconded by Richard Radley, to appropriate \$250 to the Kingdom Animal Shelter; so voted.

ARTICLE 15 : Shall the Town appropriate \$650 to Cobleigh Public Library for public library service?

The motion was made by Kim Crady-Smith, seconded by Peter Emerson, to appropriate \$650 to Cobleigh Library for public library service; so voted.

ARTILE 16: Shall the Town appropriate \$250 to NorthWoods Stewardship Center for the purposes of providing: summer camps, school science and outdoor programs; summer Conservation Service Corps training and jobs for local youth; low-cost forestry workshops for landowners; and maintenance of local hiking and water trails throughout the Northeast Kingdom?

The motion was made by Lorraine Poulin, seconded by Kristopher DiGiulio, to appropriate \$250 to NorthWoods Stewardship Center; so voted.

ARTICLE 17: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to purchase the property of the Francis Deos Estate, 1.12 acres on Route 122, for an amount not to exceed \$8,000?

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Carol Rossi, to authorize the Selectboard to purchase the property of the Francis Deos Estate, 1.12 acres on Route 122, for an amount not to exceed \$8,000.

Discussion ensued and citizens debated the issue. Possible benefits to owning the property included the use of it for a green space, showcasing the beautiful falls; ownership of land that would be needed if the twin bridges were ever expanded; ownership of the land the fire department's dry hydrant is on; the town plan goal to encourage the development of renewable energy sources and look into the possibility of a micro-hydro project at that site; acquisition of the water privileges that go with the property and concern that it could be purchased by a party that develops it into a property that created a negative impact on the village. The reasons given for not purchasing the property included the cost, the responsibility for management that would be incurred (the town is struggling to take care of the property it already owns), and the fact that there are other organizations that could purchase it and develop it into a green site. Gaylon Smith spoke to the value of ensuring that the fire department had access to the dry hydrant on the property. "This could save a life."

The motion passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 18: Shall the Town of Wheelock enter into a communications union district (CUD) to be known as NEK Community Broadband, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Ch82?

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Kristopher DiGiulio, that the Town enter into a communications union district to be known as NEK Community Broadband; so voted.

ARTICLE 19: To transact any other business that properly comes before the meeting?

The Kingdom East Supervisory Union will be holding meetings in each of the towns in the school district to inform the citizens of the plans to address facilities needs. A handout was made available giving the dates and times of all the meetings.

ARTICLE 20: Shall the voters authorize Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District to appropriate and expend a budget of \$794,823.00? (To be voted by Australian Ballot)

The motion was made by Jason DiGiulio, seconded by Dennis Sawyer, to pass over Article 20; so voted.

ARTICLE 21: To adjourn.

The motion was made by Dennis Sawyer, seconded by Brenda Smith, to adjourn; so voted. The meeting adjourned at 11:45am.