

TOWN OF WHEELOCK  
ANNUAL MEETING  
MARCH 5, 2024

Present to Officate the Meeting: Moderator Peter Miller, Selectboard member Ann Lawless, Clerk Carol Rossi to record the minutes

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Moderator Peter Miller.  
Citizens were asked to stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance.

The audience questioned whether the meeting could be held with only one Selectboard member in attendance. Ann Lawless, Selectboard member, and Carol Rossi, Clerk, responded that they had both contacted the Secretary of States Office and been advised that the meeting could be held. There was further confirmation that the vacancy in the second selectboard position could be filled at today's Town Meeting.

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

The motion was made by Kim Crady-Smith to elect Peter Miller to the position of Moderator. The motion was made by Preston Smith that nominations cease and the Clerk cast one ballot for Peter Miller; motion carried.

ARTICLE 2: To elect all town officers required by law.

The motion was made by Preston Smith to elect all town officers as required by law.

The motion was made by Marina Cole to amend the previous motion to read 'elect all officers required by law with the addition of a Selectboard position for a term of 2 years to be taken up after the election of a Selectboard position for a 3 year term'; motion carried.

A vote was then taken on the amended main motion; motion carried.

Town Clerk – 2 year term

Carol Rossi was nominated by Kathy Schmidt.

The motion was made by Steve Amos that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Carol Rossi; motion carried.

The proceedings were paused so the people could hear from Representative Dennis LaBounty. Representative LaBounty spoke about the housing crisis and the issue of homelessness. He shared information about the Vermont Housing Improvement Program, the First-Generation Homebuyer Program and the Middle-Income Homeownership Development Program. He shared that the legislature is also working on initiatives to address crime and public safety issues. He heard concerns expressed by a citizen about bill S258 which addresses the management of fish and wildlife. Citizens thanked Representative LaBounty for his work. The meeting went back into session.

Announcement made that it was 10:00AM and the polls were open for voting on the Presidential Primary and Kingdom East School District budget.

Town Treasurer – 2 year term

Carol Rossi was nominated by Kathy Schmidt.

The motion was made by Steve Amos that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Carol Rossi; motion carried.

Selectboard – 3 year term

Jason Bora was nominated by Wendy Bora.

Michael Richardson was nominated by Enid Ellis.

Greg Fields was nominated by Carol Rossi.

Michael Richardson declined nomination for the 3 year position.

Results of Paper Ballot Vote

Total Votes Cast	45
Jason Bora	24
Greg Fields	19
Spoiled	2

Jason Bora was elected to the position of Selectboard for a 3 year term.

Selectboard – 2 year term

Greg Fields was nominated by Steve Amos.

Michael Richardson was nominated by Dennis Sawyer.

Taylor Cota was nominated by Vanessa Seguin.

Results of Paper Ballot Vote

Total Votes Cast	44
Greg Fields	18
Michael Richardson	22
Taylor Cota	4

Moderator Peter Miller, after consultation with the Board of Civil Authority, declared that no candidate received the 23 votes required for a majority, therefore another vote would be held.

Results of Second Paper Ballot Vote for the 2 year term

Total Votes Cast	48
Greg Fields	21
Michael Richardson	26
Taylor Cota	0
Blank	1

Michael Richardson was elected to the position of Selectboard for a 2 year term.

Lister – 3 year term

Carol Rossi was nominated by Kathy Schmidt.

Marina Cole made the motion that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Carol Rossi; motion carried.

Lister – 2 year term

There were no nominations.

The motion was made by Martin Holladay that the Board appoint a lister for a 2 year term; motion carried.

Auditor – 3 year term

Kim Crady-Smith was nominated by Enid Ellis.

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Kim Crady-Smith; motion carried.

Auditor – 1 year term

Scott Lange was nominated by Kim Crady-Smith.

The motion was made by Karyn Patno that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Scott Lange; motion carried.

Delinquent Tax Collector – 1 year term

Emily Purdy was nominated by Kim Crady-Smith.

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Emily Purdy; motion carried.

First Constable – 1 year term

Atti Seguin was nominated by Carol Rossi.

The motion was made by Marina Cole that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Atti Seguin; motion carried.

Second Constable – 1 year term

Charles Lacaillade was nominated by Marina Cole.

The motion was made by Steve Amos that nominations cease and the clerk cast one ballot for Charles Lacaillade; motion carried.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters authorize the selectboard to appoint a municipal clerk pursuant to 17 V.S.A. Sections 2651e(a)?

The motion was made by Marina Cole to pass over Article 3; motion failed.

The motion was made by Martin Holladay to authorize the selectboard to appoint a municipal clerk; motion failed.

During discussion, it was stated that a vote in the affirmative would allow the Selectboard to hire someone from out of town. Citizens questioned if the town clerk would remain an independent office or if the person hired would be an employee of the Selectboard. The issue of the impact on 'community' was also brought up.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters authorize the selectboard to appoint a treasurer pursuant to 17 V.S.A. Section 2651f(a)?

The motion was made by Marina Cole to pass over Article 4.

Discussion of the motion continued until there was an affirmative vote to call the question. Following a voice vote, there was a request to divide the assembly.

Members of the Board of Civil Authority conducted a count of raised hands.

Results of the count were: YES – 27; NO – 9. Motion carried.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$169,674 of which \$77,260 shall be raised by taxes and \$92,414 by non-tax revenues?

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 5 as written.

The motion was made by Lorraine Poulin to amend Article 5 to read ‘Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$160,674.’ Motion to amend carried. Main motion as amended carried.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters approve total highway fund expenditures of \$464,356 of which \$360,216 shall be raised by taxes and \$104,140 by non-tax revenue?

The motion was made by Kim Crady-Smith to pass Article 6 as written.

The motion was made by Vanessa Seguin to amend Article 6 to read ‘Shall the voters approve total highway fund expenditures of \$464,356.’ Motion to amend was carried. A division of the assembly was called for to decide on the main motion as amended. Members of the Board of Civil Authority counted raised hands. The result of the vote was YES – 24, NO – 7. Main motion as amended carried.

Audience members sought clarifications on multiple issues related to the purchase of a new truck. Selectboard member Ann Lawless shared that the \$38,990 Class II road grant was for resurfacing a portion of the South Wheelock Rd with staymat. Audience members shared suggestions and ideas about cost saving measures that could be taken. Concerns were expressed about the expenses related to equipment repair. One recommendation made related to the highway department was for greater oversight and for a technical review to identify areas of need for training, development and implementation of procedures, clarification of duties...It was suggested that the budget process begin earlier and be completed much earlier.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters authorize the purchase of a new dump truck to replace the ‘09 International, in an amount not to exceed \$240,262.00, less the trade in of \$25,000 and subject to reduction by other sources of funding, total to be financed over a period not to exceed five years, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec 1786a?

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner to pass Article 7 as written. Following a voice vote the Moderator determined to be in the affirmative, a division of the Assembly was called for. The Board of Civil Authority counted raised hands. Results of the vote were YES – 22, NO – 5; the motion carried.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for deposit into the Bridge and Major Road Repair Reserve Fund, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2804(a)?

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 8 as written; motion carried.

The suggestion was made that the town review its investments with the aim of getting the better returns.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 for deposit into the New Road Equipment Reserve Fund, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2804(a)?

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 9 as written; motion carried.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 for deposit into the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance and Repair Reserve Fund, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2804(a)?

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 10 as written; the Moderator declared the motion carried following a voice vote. A division of the assembly and hand count confirmed that the motion carried.

Concerns were expressed that there was no written procedure for use funds in the Reserve accounts. A request was made for clarification on the potential use of each of the reserve accounts.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for deposit into the Town Hall Project Reserve Fund, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2804(a) to be funded with \$7,238.91 remaining from the Cemetery Checking Account?

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 11 while acknowledging that it contained an error.

The motion was made by Martin Holladay to amend Article 11 to read ‘Shall the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for deposit into the Town Hall Project Reserve Fund in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec 2804(a)? ‘  
Motion to amend carried. Main motion as amended carried.

Citizens asked if there was a plan for addressing the long-standing need for a public facility that was safe, accessible and met the needs of the town. During the discussion, citizens expressed frustration with the lack of progress made during the past 15 years. No one present disputed the need to address facility issues.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the town establish a reserve fund to be called the Cemetery Checking Reserve Fund to be used for repair and maintenance expenses and matching funds for grants in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2804 to be funded with \$7,235.16 remaining from the Cemetery Checking Account?

The motion was made by Kim Crady-Smith to pass Article 12 as written; motion carried.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of \$36,284.22 for the operating expenses of Lyndon Rescue, Inc?

The motion was made by Martin Holladay that Article 13 be passed as written; motion carried.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of \$32,149.00 for the operating expenses and equipment replacement fund of the Sheffield/Wheelock Fire Department?

The motion was made by Lorraine Poulin that we pass Article 14 as written; motion carried.

Lorraine Poulin spoke in support of our volunteer fire department as the members had left the meeting to respond to a call. The Fire Department is in need of and seeking new members.

Suggestion made that next year's Warning include an Article related to the discussion of all reports.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the voters raise and appropriate a total of \$40,980 for the Town's share of Transfer Station expenses?

The motion was made by Martin Holladay to pass Article 15 as written; motion carried.

ARTICLE 16: Shall the voters authorize that payment of real estate taxes be to the Treasurer on or before the first Friday of November annually, with USPS postmarks accepted, and with delinquent taxes having interest charges of one percent (1%) per month, and with a seven percent (7%) penalty charged against them from the due date pursuant to 32 V.S.A. Sec. 5136?

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner to pass Article 16 as written; motion carried.

ARTICLED 17: Shall the town allow a grace period from the due date for current taxes to December 31, during which the Delinquent Tax Collector shall charge 1% penalty on payments made in full pursuant to 32 V.S.A. Sec 1674(3)(B)?

The motion was made by Martin Holladay to pass Article 17 as written.

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to amend Article 17 to read ‘Shall the town allow a grace period from the due date for current taxes to December 31, during which the Delinquent Tax Collector shall charge only 1% penalty on payments made in full pursuant to 32 V.S.A. Sec 1674(3)(B)?’ Motion to amend carried.

Main motion as amended carried.

ARTICLE 18: Shall the voters appropriate a total of \$4,757 to the following social service agencies, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2691?

a. Community Restorative Justice Center	\$250
b. Darling Inn Senior Meal Site	\$500
c. H.O.P.E.	\$500
d. Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging	\$300
e. Northeast Kingdom Human Services	\$1622
f. Northeast Kingdom Learning Services	\$150
g. Northeast Kingdom Youth Services	\$250
h. Rural Community Transportation	\$500
i. Umbrella	\$600
j. Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$85

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner to pass Article 18 as written;  
motion carried.

A request was made to place the requesting organizations on the warning individually in the future and ask that a representative be present.

ARTICLE 19: Shall the voters approve the appropriation request by the Cobleigh Library for \$1,000?

The motion was made by Carol Rossi to pass over this article.  
The motion failed.

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 19 as written;  
motion carried.

A request was made that the Selectboard review and revise the town’s policy related to social service agency and other petitioned requests for appropriations.

ARTICLE 20: Shall the Town of Wheelock vote to appropriate the sum of \$1000.00 for the support of Powers Park to provide services to the residents of the town in Accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2691?

The motion was made by Eileen Boland to pass Article 20 as written; motion carried.

ARTICLE 21: Shall the town appropriate \$1,1133.00 to the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium for admission for Wheelock residents in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2691?

The motion was made by Jill Faulkner to pass Article 21 as written; motion carried.

ARTICLE 22: To transact any other non-binding business that comes before the meeting.

Eileen Boland, appointed representative to the Communications Union District, was recognized as a guest speaker with a presentation on broadband. Due to the late hour, she offered to stay after the meeting adjourned to share information and answer questions. A display board with information on current and proposed broadband initiatives for Wheelock will be on display outside the Clerk's Office.

ARTICLE 23: To Adjourn.  
The motion was made by Kathy Schmidt to adjourn at 3:39pm; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Rossi, Town Clerk

Approved:

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Moderator

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Justice of the Peace